

ELECTION  
2006  
SPECIAL

SPECIAL MIDTERM ELECTION ISSUE!

# THE AMERICAN Prospect

LIBERAL INTELLIGENCE



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WHY SHOULD AMERICANS KEEP  
VOTING FOR **REPUBLICANS**  
WHO OFFER NOTHING BUT THE  
POLITICS OF **HYSTERIA** AND  
**FEAR**?

BECAUSE, YOU **IDIOT**--IF THE  
CUT-AND-RUN **DEFEATOCRATS**  
WIN THESE MIDTERMS, THE  
**SCARY TERRORISTS** WILL  
**KILL US ALL!!!**



## NOVEMBER ... AND BEYOND

**Siegel and Blustein:** South Dakota Abortion Showdown

**Cocco:** Ohio, Disaster Waiting to Happen (Again)

**Kuttner:** Hill Investigations We'd Like to See

**Rosenfeld:** Tom DeLay's Free Advice for Democrats

Meyerson on Harold Ford ★ McNeill on Sherrod Brown ★ Dionne in Books ★ More

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*"The hardest thing about any political campaign is how to win without proving that you are unworthy of winning."*

— ADLAI STEVENSON



## SPECIAL ISSUE

### The Midterm Elections, in Three Parts

We can't cover *everything* here; but in this special issue you'll find reporting on subjects and races that carry special symbolic importance, and arguments about how progressives should seize the day at the beginning (finally!) of the post-Bush era.

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*Cover illustration by Tom Tomorrow*

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# Thinking About the Government

**A**MERICA MAY GET ITS TWO-PARTY SYSTEM BACK after November. But the competition could turn out to be neoconservative Republicans versus Eisenhower Republicans, with the latter played by Democrats. As the society becomes more unequal and working families

face increasing economic stress about their jobs, wages, pensions, health coverage, housing, and child-care costs, a considerable faction of the Democratic Party contends that government neither can, nor should, address these ills. That would leave the Democrats as the party of fiscal stewardship, token programs, and empty talk—none of which addresses ordinary people where they live.

One strand of this argument contends that, despite rising insecurity and inequality, most people are doing fine; so it's a mistake for Democrats to emphasize pocketbook issues, lest Democrats become a minority party of the poor. The ur-text for this view is Stephen Rose's April 2006 piece for the Democratic Leadership Council, "The Trouble with Class-Interest Populism." We invited Rose and several others to debate this question on the *Prospect* Web site ([www.prospect.org/middleclass](http://www.prospect.org/middleclass)). Have a look. This has to be the key domestic policy battle for the Democratic soul.

In fact, Democrats' pocketbook programs have never been for the poor only. The best ones have addressed the economic opportunity and security of the working middle class, the working poor, and the needy alike—cementing a political alliance among everyone who is not independently wealthy. The most expansive and popular programs—like Social Security, Medicare, the GI Bill, and federal college aid—served these twin economic and political goals. That's why Newt Gingrich was so determined to kill any ver-

sion of universal health insurance, lest it bond a new generation to the idea of benevolent government with Democrats as the reliable custodian.

At no time since the Great Depression have the working poor and the working middle class had more in common in their economic vulnerability, or been more in need of cross-class government programs, such as reliable pensions, health insurance, protections against income loss, and new needs of the broadly defined working family, such as child care. To the extent that a class war is going on, it is the top 1 percent versus the bottom 80 percent. That's a war progressives can actually win.

If the claim that activist government addresses only "the poor" is a canard, so is the contention that regular people are economically content (recently echoed by *New York Times* columnist David Brooks, favorably citing Rose). Several public opinion polls by reputable pollsters such as Pew, Hart, and Lake, released just before Labor Day, found that a majority of respondents believed the next generation would be economically worse off. Majorities exceeding 60 percent expressed serious worry about losing health or pension benefits, losing or never buying a home, and not being able to afford

to retire. And these were mostly middle-class respondents. If there is not political pay dirt for progressives here, where is it? Perhaps in elite campaigns to balance the federal budget?

**A**S IT HAPPENS, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT another group of center-right Democrats is arguing. Robert Rubin's Hamilton Project is the perfect fiscal complement to Rose's counsel of economic complacency. The Hamilton Project calls for greater opportunity, but the fine print divulges the principal goal—restoring fiscal balance with a cap on Social Security and Medicare, and dedicating higher tax revenues mainly to budget discipline.

Fiscal responsibility is necessary, but not an end in itself. Balance can be achieved with low social spending or more adequate spending, and with or without progressive taxation. It's hard to imagine redressing inequality and insecurity without activist government. If the main purpose of the Democratic Party has dwindled to responsible stewardship of a government ever less equipped to make a positive difference in the lives of ordinary people, Grover Norquist will have won his crusade to marginalize both government and Democrats.

Bob Woodward reported Bill Clinton's outburst in early 1993, when Clinton's advisers were insisting on the primacy of budget balance. "Where are all the Democrats?" the new president fairly howled in dismay. "We're all Eisenhower Republicans."

Actually, that slights Dwight Eisenhower, who expanded Social Security, launched the interstate highway system, and increased federal research and education aid, much of it disguised as national defense. I actually had a National Defense Foreign Language Fellowship to study an esoteric language, Spanish. And under Ike, the top income tax rate for the wealthy was 91 percent. Ah, the progressive '50s. **TAP**

— ROBERT KUTTNER

*It's difficult to redress economic inequality and insecurity without activist government.*



## Good Point

THE COVER YOU CHOSE TO promote Flynt Leverett's wise and thoroughly well-informed article "Illusion and Reality" [September 2006] is a good example of why so many of us European friends of the American Democratic Party begin to lose all hope for democratic politics in the United States. If it is true, as Leverett and millions of others believe, that careful negotiation from a starting point of realism is the only hopeful way forward towards Middle East peace, why do you have to sell that with a cover demonizing two of the principal players as "war makers"? As though Bush and Blair were not war makers? Is the Democratic Party so split by the Middle East conflict that there can never be a true opposition in the Congress to the disastrous current administration?

ANGUS WRIGHT  
*Monoblet, France*

## God, That Was Bad

SILLY ME. UNTIL I READ Peter Steinfels [September], I thought that the religious right was a real problem. I thought it was a social and political force that was fanning the flames of blind patriotism and militarism, encouraging

*Diversity appeals  
because it has  
fewer powerful  
opponents than  
equality.*

— HERBERT J. GANS  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

anti-intellectualism and stunting scientific advancement, and generally acting as an obstacle to liberal progress in America. In fact, I had thought that perhaps there might be a causal connection between two characteristics that make America unique among western societies—our infatuation with conservative religion and our rejection of social democracy. But Steinfels enlightened me, explaining that the works of Michelle Goldberg, Kevin Phillips, and James Rudin, all critical of the religious right and its effect on America, amount to little more than alarmist secularist propaganda.

In fact, Steinfels illustrates a key problem with liberalism today. Though he concedes that the Bush administration's policies are "disastrous," he downplays the significance of religious conservatism in helping to bring them about. Disinclined to confront conservative religion (and uncertain about how to do so even if an inclination existed), Steinfels and other apologists instead dismiss the religious right as little more than a quirky passing phenomenon. Well, we've been waiting for three decades, and it's not going away.

DAVID A. NIOSE  
*Fitchburg, MA*

## C'mon, Walter

WALTER BENN MICHAELS' appeal for a greater stress on economic equality, "The Trouble with Diversity," [September] is badly needed but why must it be accompanied by an extended attack on diversity?

I see no evidence that the left could have brought about more equality had the diversity movement never been invented. Nor would advocates of diversity have instead joined the struggle for equality, for most are not even on the left.

Diversity appeals because it has fewer powerful opponents than equality; thus the ethnic and racial minorities fighting for diversity can achieve it virtually by their own efforts. Sometimes, these efforts are also for more equality although mostly on the middle-class labor market.

True, the poor are once more left behind, and I wish Professor Michaels had told us more about what the left can do to help them escape poverty.

HERBERT J. GANS  
*Robert S. Lynd professor  
of sociology, Columbia  
University, New York, NY*

## Force Daylight

IN HIS "MEMO TO HOUSE Democrats" [September], Robert Reich retreats from his customary sound judgment to offer a piece of doubtful advice. He warns that if the Democrats should take back the House this November, they must avoid whining, harping on and exposing the appalling performance of the Bush years. Instead, he says, they should propose creative alternatives to the Republican fiascos on so many fronts.

No way. That is not how the system works. Progressive proposals can be effective only after the political battles are won. Co-opting middle ground conservatives won't create new options in Iraq (an indefinite withdrawal?) or cure Republican deficits (by paring down welfare spending?). On the contrary, propounding new plans will encourage the shouting reactionaries.

Recall from American folklore: Oil money did everything for the political parties except refine them. Should we now forget the rout of the Clintons' alternative health plan and deficit reduction? Or the liberal peace proposals we argued so carefully for Vietnam, arms control, and Iraq? They raised the Democrats' intellectual profile but barely budged Nixon, Reagan, or Bush off course; and they won little electoral approval.

No, the priority for Democrats is first to expose the criminal abuses of the Bush elites and not to bring expert witnesses and policy wonk ideas to committee hearings. Let Hillary, Joe Lieberman, the generals, and the business-minded economists argue about when to quit Baghdad or how to handle debt financing. Instead, the opposition must force daylight into the conspiracies of the last six years, it must stop Bush in his tracks, and so gear up for the 2008 elections.

WALTER GOLDSTEIN  
*New York, NY*

*Letters to the editors should be sent to letters@prospect.org or mailed to The Editors, The American Prospect, 2000 L St., NW, Suite 717, Washington, D.C. 20036.*



# Up Front



## PICK 'EM

WASHINGTON IS A CITY OF EXOTIC AND PARTICULAR professions. If you live in AU Park or Chevy Chase-D.C. or any of the other better neighborhoods in what is sometimes impolitely called Upper Caucasia, you will very likely find that your neighbors include: an engineer at the Bureau of Land Management, an education Ph.D. at—no, not the Education Department—the Department of Agriculture, and a cartographer at FEMA, who, unlike his old boss, probably is indeed doing a heckuva job.

A rung or two above them is another class of toilers, with work equally exotic: the people who spend their entire lives analyzing elections, demography, census data, and the ramifications of the fact that the 4000 block of a certain DuPage County boulevard has changed congressional districts. They labor in obscurity most of the time, but biennially, they achieve celebrity. And right about now, the demand for people like handicappers Stuart Rothenberg, Chuck Todd, and Charlie Cook is at its zenith.

Their existence serves to remind that, while the rest of us are just now pondering whether Jim Pederson can take out John Kyl in Arizona (if we're even pondering it at all), there exists a small army in Washington that's been quietly tracking the question for *years*, by every conceivable measure, and even several that are inconceivable to the rest of us. It's not clear that they make Washington a fascinating place to live, but they constitute a highly useful division of that vast army based here that serves the vital function of paying attention to certain things so the rest of us don't have to.

— MICHAEL TOMASKY

## A TALE OF SEVERAL SLOGANS

After the 2004 elections, the Democrats decided to eschew policy wonks and political strategists and take their cues from some professionals with real populist acumen: Berkeley linguists. With George Lakoff's emphasis on framing firmly in mind, Democrats put an unusual amount of thought into their slogans. But to little avail. "Together, America Can Do Better" was their typically banal consensus choice. But then, a new tagline started appearing in the e-mails of Howard Dean, Ted Kennedy, Paul Hackett, Wesley Clark, and several others: "Enough is enough." Whether it referred to Republican rule or cognitive linguism, the guerrilla tagline caught fire ... at least until the party pivoted once more and settled on yet a *third* catchphrase: "A New Direction." Here's hoping it at least leads away from Lakoff.

## RACE TO THE BOTTOM

Nothing like election season for some tasty GOP racial gaffes. First, Senator George Allen of Virginia used the slur “macaca” in reference to an Indian American staffer of his opponent. Then the front-runner to take Katherine Harris’ congressional seat in Florida was caught on tape opining that “blacks are not the greatest swimmers or may not even know how to swim.” And then, the *Los Angeles Times* obtained a recording of a spring meeting between

California Governor **Arnold Schwarzenegger** and members of his inner circle, in



which the Governor debates whether or not a particular assemblywoman

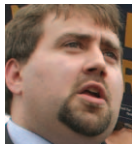
is Cuban or Puerto Rican before deciding it's irrelevant: "I mean, they are all very hot. They have the, you know, part of the black blood in them and part of the Latino blood in them that together makes it." Arnold's spokesperson claims the quote was "taken totally out of context," which, really, only invites a whole host of new questions.

## WHERE'S THE DYSTOPIA?

The alternative history is a venerable genre, populated by literary figures from Philip K. Dick to Philip Roth. The Republican National Committee is doing them one better this cycle, with the September launching of the mock Web site, *America Weakly*. It's a newspaper reporting from a future in which Democrats have captured both houses of Congress. Alas, it's a surprisingly banal vision. Not a single Democrat joins al-Qaeda or sneaks Saddam Hussein out of prison. The sharpest digs they can muster are an op-ed titled "We're Back! A Trial Lawyer Speaks Out" and the revelation that California Congressman Pete Stark is "rumored to be working on a bill" for universal health care. Heavens no!

## THE QUESTION: ASSUMING DEMOCRATS TAKE OVER, WHAT SHOULD SPEAKER PELOSI DO FIRST?

"Put John Murtha and Henry Waxman in charge of Iraq policy and accountability. It will be hard to do anything big until we deal with Iraq."



— **Tom Matzzie**, Washington director, MoveOn.org

"Restore faith in American democracy through full public financing of our elections and fixing our broken election systems."



— **Chellie Pingree**, president, Common Cause

"Dissolve committees and divide the House into various investigative panels. It would guarantee us the entertainment to which we are entitled."



— **Larry J. Sabato**, director for politics, University of Virginia

### DANCING WITH DELAY

Retired machine boss Tom DeLay has shifted focus from political spoilage to reality TV, recently sending a mass e-mail to supporters urging them to vote for "a good friend of mine, country music singer and GOP supporter Sara Evans," in the new season of ABC's "Dancing With the Stars." (Contestants are voted out weekly by the television audience.) Texas District Attorney Ronnie Earle has remained relatively quiet, stating only that his office is "looking into" allegations of a money-laundering scheme involving Indian casino revenue and Evans' political action committee.

### NO RESPECT

September 5 was primary day in Florida. The Florida GOP sent congratulatory e-mails



to Republican winners across the state. But GOP Senate primary victor

**Katherine Harris**, whose campaign against Democratic incumbent Bill Nelson had long ago devolved into a comic-opera fiasco, never received one—and not because it had slipped into her spam filter. State party spokesman Jeff Sadosky dismissed suspicions that the party was deliberately snubbing Harris, explaining that e-mails had been sent only to those who were running for state rather than federal office. When

asked by the *Orlando Sentinel* what the party planned to do for Harris now that she had won the nomination, he was decidedly reluctant to offer details: "That's yet to be determined."

### THE HILLORIST

A new biography of Karl Rove by Wayne Slater and James Moore claims that when he moved into his West Wing office, he brought in three high-ranking Catholic priests to rid the room of evil spirits. Deal Hudson, a participant in the exorcism, explains that "[i]t was an actual liturgical ceremony. We sat at the table, we prayed." No word yet if Rove suffered any burns from the holy water.

### THE WILD KINGDOM G.W.O.T.

In an infamous recent speech at the American Legion National Convention, Donald Rumsfeld channeled Churchill in likening appeasement to "feeding a crocodile, hoping it would eat you last." Shortly after that, famed crocodile hunter Steve Irwin died—in a tragic, fluke run-in with a stingray. In *National Review*, neoconservative writer Cliff May wasted no time switching gears from a discussion of Irwin's death to elucidating a proper stingray-as-Islamofascism metaphor. "I do wonder if Irwin ... may not have gradually become over-confident in the face of danger. Nations, as much as

individuals, are susceptible to such thinking." Indeed, as May put it, "Every stingray is a very real and present danger." Positively Churchillian.

### PICTURE THIS

On September 10, President Bush laid two wreaths in the footprints of the former towers at ground zero. *The Washington Post* noted the occasion's solemnity and observed that it "left aside the partisan rancor" that Bush & Co. have made their specialty since 9-11 (that's probably not how the *Post* would've finished that sentence). Well, it's perfectly true that there was no partisan rancor. But there was partisanship—New York's Democratic senators weren't invited. A photograph in the September 11 *New York Post* showed George and Laura Bush flanked by George Pataki, Mike Bloomberg, and Rudy Giuliani. Four Republicans (or

five if you count Laura), and no Chuck Schumer or Hillary Clinton. They were invited, naturally, to the ceremony where there were no cameras, in St. Paul's Church.

### FUZZY MATH

In August, U.S. forces in Baghdad launched a security crackdown called Operation Forward Together to curb rampant sectarian violence in the capital city. The operation appeared to yield results, with commanders touting a remarkable 52 percent drop in Baghdad's murder rate from July to August. Then the Iraqi Health Ministry released figures showing that the number of violent deaths in the Baghdad area in August—1,536—was actually quite close to July's figure. Turns out the military had left out deaths by mortars, rockets, bombs, and suicide attacks. Um, how do they count soldiers' deaths? **TAP**

## QUIZ

### Spot the fake 2006 right-wing book title

- A. *The Enemy at Home: The Cultural Left and Its Responsibility for 9-11*
- B. *Can She Be Stopped?: Hillary Clinton Will Be the Next President of the United States Unless ...*
- C. *The Nancy Party: Weakness, Appeasement, and the Pelosi Democrats*
- D. *Bankrupt: The Intellectual and Moral Bankruptcy of Today's Democratic Party*
- E. *Godless: The Church of Liberalism*

ANSWER: C. *The Nancy Party*

# Reluctant Radicals

BY MARK SCHMITT

IT IS CONVENTIONAL WISDOM THAT THE NEW DEMOCRATIC activists of the “netroots” are strong on political tactics but don’t have much to contribute to the war of ideas. Matt Bai, writing in *The New York Times Magazine*, charged disparagingly that “leaders of the netroots ... will

tell you that Big Ideas are overrated.”

This isn’t entirely fair, but let’s take the point: The better-known lefty blogs are indeed weighted toward the tactical. They argue that the liberal establishment of think tanks and advocacy groups is built on the assumption that the government wants to do good and is open to their expertise, and not organized for the task of winning back such a government from its enemies.

The no-ideas argument neglects the denizens of another room on the Internet, which hardly lacks ideas: the “wonkosphere,” a term I borrow from Henry Farrell of the gleefully erudite blog Crooked Timber. The leading lights of the wonkosphere include Josh Marshall’s Talking Points Memo and its spin-off TPMCafe, Kevin Drum at *The Washington Monthly*, economist Brad DeLong, this magazine’s rapidly growing Tapped, the blogs of its writers such as Ezra Klein and Matthew Yglesias, and a long tail that includes my own nearly defunct blog. According to the report “The Rise of the Progressive Blogosphere,” issued a year ago by the New Politics Institute, these sites together reach more than 2 million readers a week. That’s short of the three million reading DailyKos alone every week, but still pretty impressive for blogs that feature sometimes quite technical discussions of questions such as the obsolescence of the employer-based health-care system.

The cultures of the netroots and wonkosphere are quite different. Where

netroots bloggers treat most established media with contempt and can’t imagine Republicans as anything but the enemy, the wonks tend to be better connected to mainstream media or have our roots in a gentler political era. We agree that the only cause that matters now is winning, but we look back nostalgically and forward longingly to an era when policy might matter. When the two meet, sparks fly. Recently, DeLong waved a big red flag in front of the netroots by responding to Paul Krugman’s call for populism with the admission, “My natural home is in the bipartisan center, arguing with center-right reality-based technocrats about whether it is center-left or center-right policies that have the best odds of moving us toward goals that we all share.” For this he was denounced by blogger Duncan Black (Atrios) not with the netroots’ gold medal of insults—“wanker”—but as a “sensible liberal,” which is not quite as bad.

THAT SUCH MUTUAL MISUNDERSTANDING is not new came to mind when I read David Brown’s superb new biography of the historian Richard Hofstadter. Hofstadter was very much a sensible liberal. In one moving chapter, Brown describes Hofstadter’s baffled confrontation

with the New Left rising on Morningside Heights in the late 1960s—its contemptuous attitude toward mainstream liberalism, its affinity for violence, its dreamy idealism. (The underlying story of liberal breakdown is at least as old as Ivan Turgenev’s *Fathers and Sons*.) And the New Left activists couldn’t understand how someone so firmly against the Vietnam War could nonetheless be so deeply invested in the corrupt institutions of the bipartisan center. The political Internet sometimes seems like an electronic version of Morningside Heights in the 1960s.

THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE New Left and the old liberals was a deep tragedy, a dialogue of the deaf from which we still have not quite recovered. But its more recent analogue seems much more productive than destructive. The netroots aren’t reading Herbert Marcuse or fantasizing about participatory democracy; they want to fix up the Democratic Party! And the wonkosphere has absorbed much of the spirit of the netroots. For example, in recent posts both Drum and Marshall admitted that while their natural inclinations were to be somewhat center-left and a little technocratic, the past six

years had made them much fiercer partisans—reluctant radicals, but radical nonetheless. DeLong, in his controversial post, admitted: “The events of the past decade and a half have convinced [Krugman], I think, that people like me are hopelessly naive, and that the Democratic coalition is the only place where reality-based dis-

course is possible. ... He may well be right.”

The challenge will come when the tone of politics changes and a bipartisan center seems to be or becomes a realistic idea. Then, perhaps, the wonkosphere will go off in pursuit of compromise while the netroots still man the barricades. But for now, the two cultures are dealing with each other a lot better than they did in Morningside Heights 40 years ago. **TAP**

*The blogosphere vs.  
the wonkosphere:  
strong echoes of  
Morningside  
Heights in the  
late 1960s.*



# Political Earthquake

BY RUTH ROSEN

**I**MAGINE STEPPING INTO A POLLING BOOTH AND voting for candidates who, instead of being bought and paid for by corporations, unions, or wealthy donors, are financed by public funds, and accountable to you and other citizens.

Sounds utopian, doesn't it? Well, clean-money elections already exist in Maine and Arizona, states too small to challenge the nation's political culture. But public financing of state elections and initiatives this fall just might expand to California, a state so large and influential that every major policy decision tends to influence the rest of the nation.

Efforts at clean-money legislation have recently failed in California because elected officials were already too committed to corporations, insurance companies, unions, and wealthy donors. But within only six weeks, the California Nurses Association gathered enough signatures to put it on the ballot as an initiative.

As a result, on Election Day, Californians will vote on Proposition 89, the Clean Money and Fair Elections Act, which would encourage candidates to choose public financing, penalize those who use private funding, and strictly limit campaign contributions by special interests who might expect favors in return.

What would happen if public-financed campaigns replaced special interests? State Assembly Member Loni Hancock, who authored the original legislation, points out that "clean money [is] the reform that makes all other reforms possible. So it's interesting that after five years of clean money elections, the state of Maine enacted universal health care last year."

In Maine and Arizona, voter-owned elections have helped eliminate the corrupting influence of special-interest

money on public policy. Arizona's governor, Janet Napolitano, has repeatedly described her new freedom to address public health, preschool education, health care and the protection of the environment. In Maine, they will tell you that "clean legislators" have voted twice as often for environmental legislation. Arizona Representative Leah Landrum Taylor, an African American woman, says that now more women and minorities run for—and win—public office. In those states, too, public-financed campaigns have reduced the advantage of incumbency; increased voter turnout; and forced legislators and statewide officials to be accountable to the people who elected them.

Now the battle in California begins. On one side the measure is supported by the Democratic gubernatorial candidate, State Treasurer Phil Angelides, the League of Women Voters of California, Common Cause, and other nonprofit and community organizations.

On the other side is Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who as a candidate in 2003 promised to end "pay-to-play" politics, but whose tireless fund raising has made his predecessors look like amateurs at a bodybuilding contest. He is joined by the California Chamber of Commerce, the California Taxpayers' As-

sociation, insurance companies, oil companies, HMOs, three powerful unions, members of the entrenched political establishment, and consultants and lobbyists. They argue that clean-money campaigns limit free speech, by which they mean the freedom to give a candidate as much money as they please. They also claim it's a wasteful public subsidy for politicians. (Some of their objections will almost certainly end up in the courts. Fortunately, the California initiative was written so that each part can be implemented separately, if any section is litigated.)

Right now, there seems to be considerable popular momentum for Proposition 89. In 2005, a survey by the Public Policy Institute of California found that 92 percent of California adult residents believe that special interests control the electoral process. Every major newspaper in the state has editorialized either for the original legislation or the proposition itself. And in September, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi endorsed the initiative.

But public opinion could change. By October, the "No on Prop 89" campaign will likely air jaw-dropping TV ads claim-

ing that voters will be taxed to fund clean elections. In fact, the initiative would be funded by the small (\$5) "qualifying contributions" to individual candidates, as well as by a modest 0.2 percent tax levied on corporations and financial institutions. But in California, as else-

where, the word "tax" has expanded into a four-letter word.

If Proposition 89 passes, politicians nationwide, including those in Washington, D.C., will soon feel the rumbles of a California political earthquake. **TAP**



**He's on Board:** Phil Angelides

*Ruth Rosen teaches history at the University of California, Berkeley, and is a senior fellow of the Longview Institute. Her most recent book is *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*.*

# Dispatches

*"Many of Weldon's colleagues, even Republican colleagues, know not to take his explosive tirades too seriously."*

— PAGE 14



**Ken's No Doll:** Blackwell has spearheaded Ohio's push for new constraints on voters.

## CAMPAIGN '06

### MR. BLACKWELL'S DESIGNS

*The voting mess in Ohio may be even worse than it was in 2004.*

BY MARIE COCCO

HUNDREDS OF VOTERS MYSTERIOUSLY "dropped or displaced" from registration rolls when master lists were electronically merged. Absentee ballots invalidated because voters didn't receive a flier telling them not to remove a security stub. Poll workers who didn't show up to work on Election Day. Polling places unable to open on time because computer memory cards for new machines hadn't been installed. Suspicious shortages of machines in precincts that happened to be heavily Democratic. Voters who left the polls in disgust without having cast a ballot, because they just couldn't wait for over-

whelmed precinct workers to sort through a monstrous mess of administrative and equipment problems.

Ohio, 2004? Nope. Ohio, 2006.

It took Cuyahoga County officials six days after the May 2 primary to come up with a tally of results. The Election Day chaos in Ohio's most populated jurisdiction—and a heavily Democratic one—has been the subject of scathing official inquiries that found irregularities on such a grand scale they might make even Katherine Harris blush. Could this be a preview of November's midterm elections?

Perhaps. Except the sequel might be worse.

OHIO IS AGAIN THE EPICENTER OF anxiety about whether partisan malevolence combined with plain old incompetence will result in hundreds, if not thousands, of voters who are unable to cast their ballots or have them properly counted. Confronted with national controversy over the way it administered the 2004 presidential election, with allegations of vote suppression and partisan skullduggery on the part of Republican elections officials, Ohio's Republican state government took action: The legislature wrote a draconian election "reform" law that only Jim Crow could love. The embattled governor, Bob Taft, signed it into law. Now it is up to J. Kenneth Blackwell, the transparently partisan secretary of state—and current Republican candidate for governor—to administer it.

At its core, the law raises new hurdles for registering and voting in Ohio. It went so far as to mandate felony prosecutions against individuals who ran afoul of restrictive new procedures for registering voters—regulations that Blackwell interpreted as requiring an individual who registers a new voter to turn in the form personally. The rule was making it all but impossible to conduct registration drives as they traditionally are carried out by churches, interest groups, and good-government organizations. When a federal judge in Cleveland threw out the registration rules on September 1, Blackwell's office retreated and announced it wouldn't appeal.

But the registration controversy may be only the prelude to a chaotic Election Day that is likely to test the most determined voters and dedicated poll workers. Electronic voting machines are to be used statewide for the first time in a major election in which turnout is expected to nudge up, driven by the marquee race for governor between Blackwell and Democrat Ted Strickland, as well as the nip-

and-tuck U.S. Senate contest between incumbent Republican Mike DeWine and Democrat Sherrod Brown [see Jim McNeill, "The Test Case Race," page 30].

The good news is that the old punch-card machines shown to be inaccurate in 2004 are gone. The bad news is that no one knows how many counties will repeat the disastrous experience of Cuyahoga County, where shaky computerized voting machines and poorly trained workers contributed to the electoral meltdown. A bipartisan review panel issued a blistering, 400-page report on the primary that found fault at every level. More recently, the county's board of commissioners received the results of a study it ordered from the San Francisco-based Election Science Institute. The conclu-

sions at the last moment, Tokaji told me in an interview. But in June, Blackwell issued a contradictory directive to county boards of elections, indicating that a current address was required. When voting-rights groups cried foul—about 1.2 million Ohioans drive with licenses listing former addresses, according to the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*—Blackwell issued a clarifying e-mail to the counties. His office also is running public-service announcements that make the address regulation clear, Blackwell's spokesman says.

Still, many qualified voters—students or elderly and disabled patients in nursing homes, for example—neither have Ohio licenses nor access to utility bills or other required documents. For good

tification requirements, hundreds of voters could be forced to cast provisional ballots if their names do not appear on the state's master registration list, a computer-scrubbed update meant to clean the rolls of illegitimate names, as well as add new registrants. One Ohioan who already knows that her name fails to appear on the list is Jennifer Brunner—the Democrat now running for Blackwell's job.

Brunner, a former Franklin County judge, told me in an interview that the search for her own name on the state's roll turned up nothing: "I put in mine, my husband's, one of my campaign worker's—and we didn't come up in that database," she said. Thinking the source of the problem might have been with her county government, Brunner then entered the name of her sister-in-law, who lives in a different county. "She didn't come up either," Brunner said.

For the lucky voter who manages to navigate the administrative obstacles on the way to the voting booth, there is always the possibility of a challenge. The Legislature changed the notorious state law that in 2004 allowed Republicans to bring hundreds of lawyers to Ohio to challenge voters at the polls. Now only poll workers—partisans, to be sure, but divided evenly among the two parties—can mount such a contest. But during the rewrite, the Legislature added a pernicious twist: It revised the rules on challenging a voter's citizenship to force naturalized citizens (but not the native-born) to produce a document proving their citizenship. This blueprint for discrimination against Hispanics, Asians, and others with dark skin or a foreign accent is now under legal challenge.

IF CONTENTION, CONFUSION, AND THE possibility for chaos endure in Ohio, so does the state's potential for determining the direction of the nation. The DeWine Senate seat and at least three Republican-held House districts are among those seriously at risk for GOP losses. If Ohio votes out Republicans, there's a good chance it will help vote in a Congress with at least one chamber controlled by Democrats.

### *A former judge says the search for her own name on voter rolls turned up nothing. "I put in mine, my husband's, a campaign worker's"—nothing.*

sion: "The election system, in its entirety, exhibits shortcomings with extremely serious consequences, especially in the event of a close election."

It's impossible to tell how the vagaries of computerized voting will play out statewide, though many experts are optimistic about improved accuracy in the count. The untoward consequences of new constraints on voters that legislators wrote into Ohio election law are easier to predict. The panoply of new rules and restrictions "are likely to prove a real headache for election officials, poll workers and voters alike," says Daniel Tokaji, an election-law expert at Ohio State University's Moritz College of Law.

For the first time, voters must show identification at the polls—a photo ID such as a driver's license, or documents such as utility bills and bank statements. Confusion has persisted over whether the address on photo identification must be current, so that anyone who has moved and updated a voter registration—but not the address on a driver's license—might not pass muster.

The Legislature abandoned the current-address requirement for driver's li-

measure, the Legislature decreed, and Blackwell's Web site states, that "you cannot use as proof of identification a notice that the board of elections mailed to you."

"It's quite possible that a lot of people who would have been allowed to cast regular ballots in past elections will now be forced into the provisional ballot pathway," Tokaji predicts. If past elections are an indicator of future results, this can be a path to partisan gamesmanship.

IN 2004, BLACKWELL INSISTED THAT provisional ballots wouldn't be given to voters who went to the wrong precinct, and that only those cast in the correct precinct would be counted. The Legislature has now written the rule into law.

Ohio threw out 23 percent of provisional ballots cast in the presidential election, a good record compared with other states. Still, a Democratic National Committee study found that at least in Cleveland and its suburbs, voters who cast provisional ballots for Republican George W. Bush in 2004 were more likely have their votes counted than those who chose Democrat John Kerry.

Besides failure to meet the iden-



But here, too, the state's majority lawmakers sought to ensure that in close contests marred by controversial procedures, the chads will fall their way: The new law quintuples the cost of a recount. Worse, it bars anyone from contesting the official outcome of a federal election, congressional

elections included. Election reform in Ohio has become just one more way to say let the voters be damned. **TAP**

*Marie Cocco is a syndicated columnist with The Washington Post Writers' Group.*

## CAMPAIGN '06

# ANGER MISMANAGEMENT

*The House's most erratic member, Curt Weldon, may finally hit a wall.*

BY LAURA ROZEN

**T**HE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES of our era doesn't lack for camp spectacle. There's Indiana's Dan Burton, who shot at melons in his backyard to "prove" that the Clintons had Vince Foster murdered. Tom Tancredo of Colorado once advocated that America "take out" Muslim holy sites. The list goes on.

But that list, lengthy as it is, is surely topped by Pennsylvania's Curt Weldon. Known as something of a fist-banger and loose cannon—and continually denied a committee chairmanship by his fellow House Republicans despite his 20 years of service—Weldon has a knack for uncovering fantastic government conspiracies. Word of this is finally getting around his suburban Philadelphia district, and he faces his first real challenge in ages this fall, from Joe Sestak, a retired Navy vice admiral fed up with Republican national-security policy.

Weldon's reputation for Tom Clancy-esque capers may be more than offset by another longtime habit—his ability to bring defense money into the district. That it sometimes arrives with strings attached, like the hiring of Weldon friends and family members, seems to matter less than the fact that it arrives at all. It will take a Democratic tsunami for Weldon to lose, so this race is worth watching for two reasons: as an electoral bellwether, and because a Weldon departure would restore a measure of sanity to Washington.

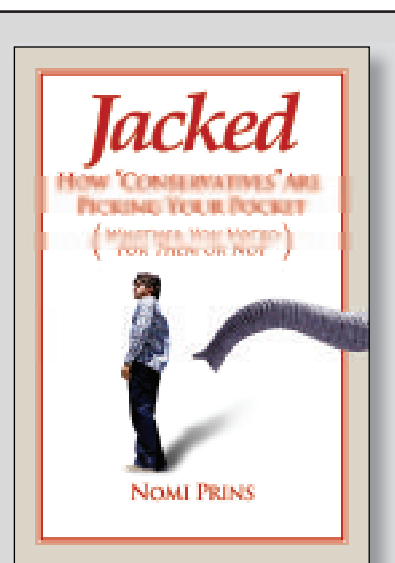
**P**ROBABLY WELDON'S MOST NOTORIOUS venture into the dark side is something known to insiders as "Able Danger," an ob-

scure and now defunct Pentagon data-mining program. Weldon claims the program identified the chief September 11 hijacker months before the attacks. The villains in his theory are civil-liberties-minded Pentagon lawyers who supposedly blocked analysts from sharing their findings with the FBI. He has even alleged that the 9-11 Commission conspired in a cover-up of the Able Danger findings. (Both the Pentagon and the 9-11 Commission vigorously dispute his accusations.)

Iran is another area in which Weldon has consistently pushed a black-helicopter narrative. He published a tabloidish book on Iran, titled *Countdown to Terror*, and went on *Meet the Press* to denounce the CIA for failing to hire his secret Iranian intelligence source. The source turned out to be a business associate of a discredited former Iran-Contra arms dealer and intelligence peddler Manucher Ghorbanifar, who has been deemed a fabricator by the CIA and was looking to get on the U.S. payroll once again.

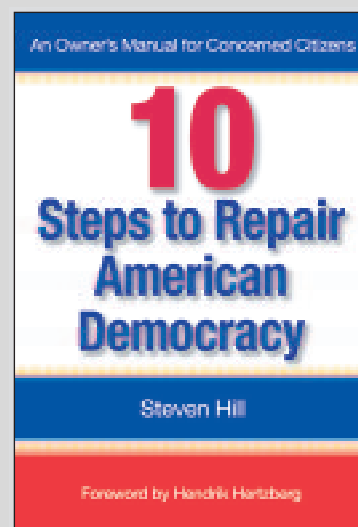
In his latest headline-grabbing tirade, Weldon has insisted that the Bush administration actually suppressed evidence of weapons of mass destruction being found in Iraq. At one point he even planned to fly to Iraq secretly and commandeer Army equipment to go dig the hidden arsenal up himself, according to Dave Gaubatz, who had planned to accompany him. (The trip was called off when Gaubatz backed out, alarmed that Weldon was trying to politicize the project.)

But it's not just Weldon's zeal for alleged conspiracies that makes eyebrows



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rise and eyes roll among his Hill colleagues. It's his international crusades and business dealings, his taste for the odd dictator and his attraction to diplomatic freelancing and intelligence dabbling. During his 33 trips to Russia, Weldon has developed cozy ties with Russian defense contractors and energy companies. Two Russian firms have hired his daughter, Karen, for government-relations work. As reported by the *Los Angeles Times*, both Weldon's daughter and his friend and real-estate agent, Cecelia Grimes, have reinvented themselves as lobbyists. Although neither of them has any Washington experience, they quickly attracted lucrative lobbying contracts from defense contractors and foreign business interests seeking federal contracts and favors.

Meanwhile, Weldon has publicly praised Uzbekistan's corrupt and brutal leader Islam Karimov, whose security services have been charged in State Department human-rights reports with systematic torture of dissidents and pro-democracy activists. "He has made himself into a champion of [Karimov] and become a tool in some of Karimov's vendettas against his adversaries," says Scott Horton, an international lawyer and adjunct professor at Columbia University Law School.

A few years ago, a Central Asia hand observed Weldon introducing a young woman to Russian energy company officials at a Eurasia-oriented petroleum economics event in Washington, D.C. "The amazing thing was that Weldon was working the room and he had this young woman with him, and it was like, 'I really want to introduce you to somebody who would do a great job to help you with government affairs,' and it was his daughter, Karen," the observer said. "A lot of people at the Uzbek embassy told me Weldon had very aggressively peddled his services to the embassy done in joint relationship with his daughter." Weldon denied aiding his daughter to a newspaper in his district in 2004.

Weldon is a go-to congressman for defense contractors seeking congressional support. But many of his colleagues, even Republican colleagues,

know not to take his explosive tirades too seriously. His unsuccessful bids to chair committees—Armed Services and Homeland Security—underscore this point. "Weldon is erratic," says a former Republican staffer to the House Armed Services Committee, on which Weldon is a ranking member. "The intelligence community does not take him seriously," says a former House intelligence committee staffer. "Anything connected to him has the same treatment. The opinion of Weldon is that he is on a crusade."

Yet despite his reputation, the fact that this November is widely expected to be the most tumultuous midterm congressional



**Curt Response:** Weldon with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Moscow, May 2004

race since 1994, and the fact that Weldon's district went 53-47 for John Kerry in 2004, he is actually looking somewhat safer than many of his fellow Republican incumbents. *The Washington Post's* political analyst Chris Cillizza rated the Weldon-Sestak race the 20th most competitive in the country, as of the first week of September, even though the challenger has successfully raised a considerable war chest.

**W**HY DOESN'T HIS NATIONAL REPUTATION for goofiness hurt him more at home? The answers may have a lot to do with Weldon's symbiotic relationship with the defense industry that has worked to create and keep jobs in and on the edges of his district. "The voters only care about one thing," says a Washington observer of Weldon, "how much money does he get back into that district?"

A case in point: Last year, with Weldon's support, an Italian-led consortium,

AgustaWestland-Lockheed, won a \$1.6 billion Navy contract to build the next generation of presidential helicopters over a U.S.-led consortium. As part of its bid, AgustaWestland, the helicopter subsidiary of Italian defense giant Finmeccanica, expanded its Philadelphia plant operations.

But there was more to the deal than jobs for his district. According to *Harper's* magazine reporter Ken Silverstein, AgustaWestland hired another Weldon daughter, Kim, to work in its public-relations department. Furthermore, another Finmeccanica subsidiary, Oto Melara, hired the real-estate agent, Cecelia Grimes, as its lobbyist. Keith Ashdown of

Taxpayers for Common Sense says Weldon promoted Grimes' lobbying clients in other ways. "Her clients were being profiled at congressional hearings that [Weldon] ran," Ashdown recalls.

Observers say Weldon is a perfect reflection of the political machine he has represented over the years. "Delaware County is, if not the most powerful, then one of the oldest and most successful political machines in the United States," says former Weldon opponent Dave Landau. "And Weldon is only a functionary of the machine."

Come November, we'll know whether the voters of Pennsylvania's 7th District still think the machine delivers for them. But here's one sign Weldon's worried: Shortly after Labor Day, he introduced a resolution that would give on-the-ground military commanders—instead of the president—the authority to decide when to bring American troops home from Iraq. *The Hill's* account of the move noted that Weldon was attempting to position himself as independent of President Bush, whose Iraq policy he has mostly supported down the line. It also observed dryly that Weldon was forced to settle for a nonbinding resolution "after learning that legislation would conflict with the president's constitutional war powers." That's not the sort of thing that's usually stopped him in the past. **TAP**

**Laura Rozen** is a Prospect senior correspondent.

## CAMPAIGN '06

## COLLEGE DROPOUTS

*The campaign to reform the Electoral College actually gains ground.*

BY BRENDAN MACKIE AND BEN WEYL

SOMEWHERE, SAMUEL J. TILDEN may be smiling. The 1876 Democratic presidential nominee—who won the popular vote but lost the presidency to Rutherford B. Hayes—would surely approve of the movement afoot to entrust the American people with the direct election of their president. Though the outcome is far from certain, increasingly energized reformers have the Electoral College in their crosshairs.

John Koza, a Stanford professor, is the brains behind the National Popular Vote campaign, a bipartisan organization promoting an innovative way to reform the Electoral College system that would elect the president, essentially, by a national popular vote.

Koza's big problem with the Electoral College isn't just the rare election when the incoming president has lost the popular vote. He's concerned that under the current system, presidential candidates play a game of nationwide hopscotch, paying attention only to the handful of states that could swing the election and ignoring the rest. This effectively disenfranchises the residents of the two-thirds of the country whose states vote solidly red or blue. "Ninety-nine percent of the money and 92 percent of the visits go into just 16 states," Koza said.

And more may be on the way out. According to National Popular Vote, in the last 45 years, the number of electoral votes considered up for grabs has halved, dwindling from 327 electoral votes (of the 538 total) in 1960 to merely 159 today. "That hardening of the political artery has reduced the number of states that are getting close," said Rob Richie, executive director of FairVote, an electoral reform organization closely aligned with Koza's group. "More states are moving out of play than into play."

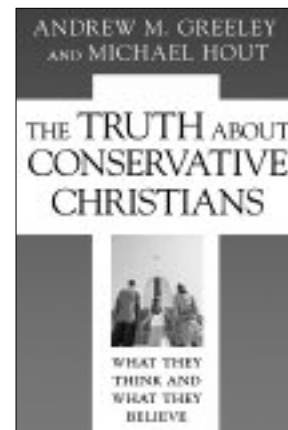
The interests of those few voters that

determine the election get pandered to with the best American politicians can muster. After watching the last presidential race, a foreigner would be forgiven for thinking America was brimming with ethanol, yet most states don't produce a drop. But Iowa, a small swing state, does.

Academics, pundits, and reformers have fought fiercely over the Electoral College for years. Still, no matter the drawbacks of the current system, reform has been elusive. Eliminating the Electoral College by amending the Constitution is currently politically improbable: A constitutional amendment would require enactment by two-thirds of Congress followed by ratification by three-quarters of the states. On top of congressional inertia, no self-respecting swing state would ratify an amendment that would throw away its electoral meal ticket; similarly, small states are fond of the body because it gives them proportionally more influence, though reformers like Koza and Richie argue that non-battleground small states would benefit from a national popular vote. (In 1989, the House of Representatives did overwhelmingly pass a bill abolishing the college, 338-70; the measure stalled in the Senate, 13 votes short.)

That's where Koza comes in. His National Popular Vote proposal sidesteps the need for an amendment by exploiting a loophole in the Constitution that allows each state to assign its electoral votes however it sees fit. This means that, in principle, any state may legally give all its electoral votes to the candidate who can bench press the most weight or earn first place in a pie-eating contest rather than the candidate who gets the most statewide votes. Picking up Koza's idea, a growing coalition of reformers proposes that states make an agreement, known as an interstate compact, which would assign all of a state's electoral votes to the winner of the

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national popular vote. The compact would kick in only when states representing a majority of Electoral College votes have signed on, meaning that the candidate who won the popular vote would be guaranteed the majority of electoral votes, and thus the election. The president would still be elected by the Electoral College, but that body would cease to matter. (Koza, the man who invented the scratch-off lottery ticket, thought up the idea after

ate; and after going through both chambers of the California state legislature, is awaiting decision by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who has until September 30 to act on it. Koza hopes to have bills filed in all 50 states for the 2007 legislative session. (Legislators in Vermont and Arizona recently announced their intent to sponsor the bill in 2007.) "A year from now we'll know a lot more about the potential rapidity of this," said Richie.

*An Illinois Republican who backs the bill says his voters "should have the opportunity to hear [the candidates], just like those who live in Florida."*

discovering interstate compacts through his work with interstate lottery commissions, like Powerball.)

Will such a reform work? Several state legislatures have taken the proposal seriously. The bill has received attention in the Missouri, Louisiana, New York, and Illinois state assemblies; it was recently passed in the Colorado state sen-

"But there's a lot of room for optimism."

The campaign has been getting particular attention, not surprisingly, from legislatures in non-swing states. The state legislators supporting the bill have a variety of motives. For some, their states would gain political capital were presidential candidates forced to run a nationwide campaign. Tom Umberg, a California Democrat from Orange County, heads the election committee in the state assembly. After being approached by Koza, Umberg shepherded the bill through the legislature and on to the governor's desk. He wants candidates to work California voters, not just California donors. "California is largely irrelevant in the presidential election," Umberg said. "[Koza's proposal] would make the non-battleground states relevant once again."

Some Republicans, as well as Democrats, from non-swing states are also excited about Koza's proposal, largely for the same reasons. Kirk W. Dillard, state senator from Illinois and chairman of the DuPage County GOP, said he signed on because non-swing states have been neglected for too long. "I'd like to see the presidential candidates and have them meet our folks," he said. "They should have the opportunity to hear [the candidates], just like those who live in Florida." Dillard also stressed the bipartisan appeal of the national popular vote. With an earnest drawl, he noted that the bill, which is still in committee, was co-sponsored by Democratic State Senator Jacqueline

Collins, "an African American representing an urban district, [while] I am a caucasian representing a rural district." Five Republican New York Assembly members introduced the bill in late May.

Representatives from the national parties are more skeptical. Stacie Paxton, press secretary for the Democratic National Committee, said that it was too early to comment on whether the DNC would support the proposal. Josh Holmes, deputy press secretary for the Republican National Committee, also refused to comment on "process generalities." The national parties might be slow to sign on because it is unclear which party, if either, would gain from a national popular vote, a point on which Koza is inclined to agree. "Anybody who claims to know [which party would benefit] doesn't know what they're talking about," he said. "It would be a totally different ballgame."

To date, eight state legislatures are considering the proposal. That leaves 42 more to go for the National Popular Vote movement to reach its goal of nationwide coverage by January 2007. After that comes the hard part—getting the bills passed. Electoral College opponent George C. Edwards III, author of *Why the Electoral College Is Bad for America*, has called achieving this goal "a long shot."

Still, *The New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* have written enthusiastic endorsements of the interstate compact plan. And the public seems to agree. In the wake of the 2000 election, more than 60 percent of Americans wanted the Electoral College abolished, according to a Gallup poll taken shortly before the 2004 election, and strong disapproval of the body likely remains. "If you talk to people on the street about democracy and elections, there's a gut sense that there's something not right about the Electoral College," Richie said. If reformers can tap into that gut feeling and mobilize popular support, the presidential election could soon turn into an actual popularity contest. It can't help Tilden—or another such candidate named Gore—but it can make national elections national again. **TAP**

*Brendan Mackie and Ben Weyl are former American Prospect interns.*

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# DESPERATION TIME

This will be the third consecutive election in which the Republicans wrap themselves in 9-11. Expect the worst.

By Michael Tomasky

**O**N THE RECENT FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE September 11 attacks, President Bush visited all three sites of the mayhem—the field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, where the courageous passengers took down United Flight 93; the Pentagon, long since rebuilt; and Manhattan’s ground zero, earth onto which New York’s bickering and feeble Republican politicians have managed in half a decade to lay not a stone.

Any president might have taken this somber whistle-stop tour. But long experience in observing this administration’s uses of the attacks makes Bush’s excursion different—a ceremony not of national unity and grief but of image-making for the purpose of political advantage. We’ve now lived through five years of cowboy talk and admonitions to watch what we say and do; of terrorists being “on the run” and the Iraqi insurgency being in its “last throes”; of attacks—carefully not from the president, but from everyone else, and issued repeatedly—on the patriotism of critics.

For an astonishingly long time, it all worked—the GOP took back the Senate in 2002, morphing Max Cleland into Saddam Hussein. In 2004, Bush won reelection—not by much, against an uninspiring opponent who ran an awful campaign. But the talisman of 9-11 and everything that arose from it were enough to carry the Republicans over the top.

Now, as we hurtle toward our third consecutive campaign fought around these issues, it’s over. Bush

isn’t even the functional president of the United States anymore. Nearly two-thirds of Americans having given up on him—approval ratings in the 30s for the better part of a year—Bush for several months now has been president not of a nation but of a faction, and it’s very unlikely that he will ever be the president of the full nation again.

He and Karl Rove brought this condition entirely upon themselves. They see now the downside of using a national tragedy to create partisan advantage. If Bush, Rove, and the Republicans had genuinely sought to unify the country and the democratic world after 9-11, Bush would still be the recipient of goodwill, even with the catastrophe that

is Iraq. But they sought to divide and conquer, and they are left now with their meager spoils, Bonapartes after Russia. In the long run, they’re headed toward iniquity and history’s contempt. But in the short term, they will not go gently, and their particular brand of rage against the dying of

the light will produce an uglier campaign this fall than any we’ve seen in a very, very, very long time. Democrats, as will be explained below, should think of this as the Mark Kennedy election.

**Bush’s 9-11 commemorations** fell in the middle of a series of four speeches, the first delivered August 31 to American Legionnaires in Salt Lake City and the last slated for September 19 at the United Nations. Bush’s Salt Lake City speech marked the culmination of the administration’s first election-related barrage,





following speeches by Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, on successive days.

As usual, the double-speak in all the speeches defied belief. Cheney, apparently forgetting who invaded Mesopotamia, averred that “the terrorists have made Iraq the central front in this war.” Also as usual, the doublespeak was delivered in the service not of national unity but of expressly political aims. Those who disagree with us, said Cheney and (especially) Rumsfeld, are appeasers. Rumsfeld put matters more bluntly than they’ve ever been put before. His invocation of Hitler and Churchill, and his unnamed U.S. senator who said in 1939 that if only he’d talked to Hitler “all of this might have been avoided” (this was William Borah, a Republican isolationist), was widely discussed, and widely criticized, even by some pro-administration commentators. But it’s somewhere between likely and inevitable that this sort of rhetoric will continue and intensify through Election Day.

It will continue because the GOP is in more desperate shape in this election than it has been in years. One probably has to go back to the 1974 midterm elections, held in the wake of Richard Nixon’s resignation, to find a time when Republican prospects looked so bleak. Consider: Six Republican Senate incumbents are fighting for their lives. George Allen in Virginia; Rick Santorum in Penn-

sylvania; Conrad Burns in Montana; Lincoln Chafee in Rhode Island (a likely loser, as we went to press, in his September 12 primary against a conservative opponent, he also faces a strong Democratic challenge in November); Jim Talent in Missouri; Mike DeWine in Ohio. Republicans have hope of defeating only two Democratic Senate incumbents, Robert Menendez of New Jersey and Maria Cantwell in Washington. The three red-state Democratic incumbents, considered an endangered species just a few months ago, barely have races. On the House side, of the 30 or so most closely watched races, many looked as of the Labor Day weekend like possible Democratic pickups (the party needs 15 to take back the House).

Democratic control of one house of Congress, let alone both, would effectively end what remains of the Bush presidency. Put aside what the Democrats might do in terms of investigations and oversight [see Robert Kuttner, “A Slight Oversight,” page 36]. The real implosion would be within the Republican Party itself. Bush, an albattross to those seeking the GOP nomination in 2008, would be increasingly isolated within his own party: as Iraq fails to improve, those candidates would start jumping off the “stay-the-course” ship; Rumsfeld would surely have to go (a strategy the Democrats are pushing before Congress adjourns);

***If Democrats gain control of even one house of Congress, let alone both, the real implosion will be within the Republican Party itself.***



***If more Democrats had followed their convictions instead of their ambitions and voted against the war, they'd be much more credible critics today.***

Cheney would carry less weight with GOP senators; the media, never a leader but a pretty reliable follower, would start paying more respectful attention to a Democratic House or Senate majority. In sum, the White House's stranglehold on politics in this town would cease to be.

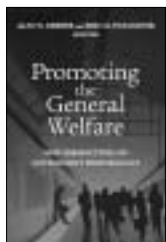
Rove, too, would be diminished, and he will obviously not let all this happen without a fight. But not just a fight; a fight, Rove style. And now we return to Mark Kennedy. He was a Democratic judge in Alabama, and in 1994, Rove ran the campaign of his GOP challenger for a seat on the state's Supreme Court. Kennedy had been a family-court judge and had taken an interest in working with abused children. As *The Atlantic's* Josh Green, who broke the story (it has become legend in certain liberal circles but is hardly known elsewhere), wrote in 2004, "Some of Kennedy's campaign commercials touted his volunteer work, including one that showed him holding hands with children." Rove did not try to counter this by, for example, showcasing his own candidate's humanitarianism. Instead, a source told Green, he helped initiate a smear campaign against Kennedy accusing him of being a pedophile.

**It won't be pedophilia this year.** It won't even be gay marriage and values. It will be Chamberlain-

ism. In early September, Bill Frist, the outgoing Senate majority leader, sketched out a strategy of trying to pin Democrats against the wall on a series of national-security votes, including one to authorize retroactively the administration's domestic surveillance program. The GOP united front around this strategy showed signs of crumbling within days. But should the Republicans pursue it, Democrats must avoid taking the bait on these votes. They need to remember that they're in this mess partly because so many of them fell into the Bush-Rove trap in 2002 and voted for the Iraq War resolution that was pushed on them a month before that year's midterms. If more of them had followed their convictions instead of their ambitions and voted against the war, they'd be much more credible critics today. They should have learned in the last five years that there is no point in trying to be bipartisan about anything.

The GOP tactics could still work. Fear of another terrorist attack remains high across the country, and the Republicans will exploit that fear more shamelessly than ever. But five years of such exploitation has also left the public weary and distrustful. And Democrats might recall that Mark Kennedy, even after Rove's whispering campaign, ended up winning that 1994 election. **TAP**

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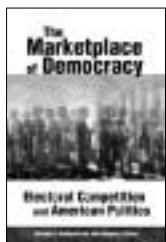
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# A Speech We'd Like to Hear

## What any Democrat should say about Iraq

My fellow Americans:

The decision to invade Iraq in the spring of 2003 divided the country and divided my party. People I respect found themselves on both sides of that controversy. But three and a half years later, it's clear that the invasion was a serious error. The president told us the invasion was necessary to prevent Saddam Hussein from giving the fruits of his WMD programs to terrorist groups like al-Qaeda. We now know that the programs did not exist, that the operational links between the Iraqi government and al-Qaeda that the administration warned of did not exist, and that the White House's claims on these subjects were the result of either deliberate deception or a willful ignorance of the truth that is in many ways more frightening.

Once the invasion was done, like most Americans I initially believed it was our responsibility to do the best we could to stabilize and reconstruct Iraq. Embarrassed by the failure to find weapons of mass destruction, the administration outlined a noble agenda to create an Iraqi democracy. These efforts began with my support and that of my party.

But almost immediately it became clear that the president had no real plan to achieve his goals. As the situation deteriorated, Democrats offered suggestions to alter our course in Iraq. Invariably, we were ignored. Time passed and things got worse. The administration eventually agreed to seek some changes, but always too late, past the moment when ideas might have helped. And so, things got even worse. It's possible that if the administration had listened to our suggestions the situation might have been turned around. But warnings went unheeded.

Now, we have reached the point where no further purpose is served by continuing

the American military presence in Iraq. The time has come to redeploy our forces—to begin the process of recovery from the war in terms of lost personnel and equipment, and to refocus our attention on other parts of the world—including most pressing the continuing threat from al-Qaeda.

The president believes—or claims to believe—that we are fighting them over there to avoid fighting them over here. This is bizarre. Our military presence in Iraq is not a physical barrier against terrorist infiltration of the United States. Since the inva-



sion, al-Qaeda has struck in Spain and twice in England. Whether we stay in Iraq has no bearing on whether they'll strike America again. What is relevant is that the longer we keep half of our deployable military in Iraq, the longer we dedicate so many of our spy satellites, Arabic-speaking intelligence officers, special-operations forces, and so much of our money to the mission in Iraq, the harder it is to bring the necessary resources to bear on the crucial issue of international terrorism.

This might be a price worth bearing if keeping our soldiers in Iraq would do some good. Unfortunately, at this point it no longer can. Our men and women in uniform

are serving with honor and distinction. But they are soldiers, not magicians. They have no way to heal the sectarian divisions that are tearing Iraq apart. They cannot conjure up a liberal democracy out of nowhere.

The future of Iraq lies in the hands of the Iraqi people and their leaders. If they can find a way to resolve the issues that divide them, there is every reason to be optimistic about the future of their country. If, as unfortunately seems more likely, they cannot and their country continues its slide into civil war, the presence of tens of thousands of American soldiers will do nothing to help Iraq and everything to endanger the lives of our troops and the long-term security of our country. This is not a pleasant reality, which is why the Bush administration has

refused to face up to it. But refusing to face unpleasant truths is the reverse of leadership. The president's plan—if you can call it a plan—is simply to continue on the current course for two more years and hand the mess he's made off to his successor.

That's unacceptable. Equally unacceptable is the White House's habit of comparing those who disagree to Neville Chamberlain and every conceivable alternative to their policies a form of appeasement. To put forward the view that America should blindly follow the dogmatic and failed leadership of the current administration is absurd, and to put it

forward under the banner of anti-fascism more absurd still. The country can't afford to be led by people who make a wreck of our national security and then lash out at anyone who dares point out the truth to cover up their own failures. And the country desperately needs a Senate that's willing to say so. To stop the blank checks and the rubber stamps and make the White House hear what the American people are thinking—that this war was a mistake, that the mistake needs to be brought to an end, and that the president can't keep on jeopardizing the security of our country out of a stubborn refusal to admit that it was a mistake.

—MATTHEW YGLESIAS

# Mommy Dearest?

*As South Dakotans prepare to vote on the nation's most draconian abortion law, they're hearing a frightening argument: that the state must "protect" women from abortion by forcing them to bear children. And the argument is spreading.*

BY REVA SIEGEL AND SARAH BLUSTAIN

**N**EXT MONTH, SOUTH DAKOTANS WILL VOTE on whether to uphold the most radical abortion ban in the nation. Allowing for abortion only "to prevent the death of a pregnant mother," the ban was enacted last March in the belief that the changing membership of the Supreme Court made timely a direct challenge to *Roe v. Wade*. The nation awaits the outcome of this referendum; but in a crucial sense, the damage has already been done.

That's because in enacting the ban South Dakota's governor and legislature gave prominent official endorsement to a claim that's been quietly spreading for decades: that abortion harms women. Asserting that women are subject to coerced and dangerous abortions, the state prohibited the procedure, it said, not only to protect the unborn, but to protect *women's* choices, *women's* health, and *women's* welfare—new justifications that borrow pro-choice language and infuse it with some very old notions about women's roles. Prohibiting abortion, the movement now emphasizes, protects women's health and choices as *mothers*.

South Dakota based its ban on a 70-page set of findings contained in the "Report of the South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion"—by far the most comprehensive government account of the arguments and evidence for protecting women from abortion. A transparently one-sided publication—even the anti-abortion chair of the task force voted against it to publicize her objections to its abstinence recommendations and abortion "facts"—the report includes a variety of findings explicitly endorsed by the legislature as the basis for the ban. Some are the more

RACHEL SALOMON





familiar, fetal-focused items, emphasizing that a fetus is a “whole separate unique living human being.” But more than half of the 10 findings focus on women. The task force found that abortions cause long-term emotional and physical damage to women, everything from suicidal ideation to the possibility of breast cancer. But the task force’s report went even further: It argued that the state needed a ban because of the epidemic overriding pressures on women to abort—from a family member, a husband or boyfriend, or an abortion clinic—that make extra protection from abortion necessary. Finally, to make credible its claims about women’s health and women’s choices, the task force made repeated claims about women’s nature. It asserted that women would never freely choose an abortion—even absent outside pressures—because doing so would violate “the mother’s fundamental natural intrinsic right to a relationship with her child.” The task force took as a statement of biological and psychological fact that a mother’s connection to her unborn baby was more authentic than her own statement of desire not to be pregnant. These gender-role convictions are at the heart of the movement’s claim that the nation must now combat an epidemic of dangerous and coerced abortions.

Even as major medical authorities challenge the “science” supporting new woman-protective anti-abortion argument, the claim is spreading. “The abortion-hurts-women movement is the most serious issue that we are dealing with in the election in South Dakota,” Sarah Stoesz, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, told the *Prospect* this summer, relating how a busload of “post-abortion women,” called the Fleet for Little Feet, was crisscrossing the state testifying about the grievous harm abortion caused them. Pro-choice activists in states from Louisiana to Ohio to Texas said it is now one of the dominant forms of anti-abortion activism that they have to fight.

South Dakota’s official endorsement of these arguments gives them more validity than ever and virtually assures that they will be employed to justify abortion restrictions across the nation. This is happening already. Repetition of these arguments in statehouses and courthouses may soften the public perception of the anti-abortion claim—especially among the moderate middle. Even if South Dakota’s ban is voted down for want of a rape or incest exception, the woman-protective argument against abortion will spread, making ever more commonplace the 19th-century forms of reasoning about women that underwrote the law. Pro-choice pundits who say there’s nothing to lose in *Roe* might think again.

**I**N 2004, A NEW JERSEY LAWYER NAMED HAROLD CASSIDY visited South Dakota. A bill proposing a radical ban on abortion had been submitted by a Republican state representative named Matt McCauley, and the state was hearing testimony. Cassidy analyzed abortion from an interesting new angle. In legislating on abortion, Cassidy suggested, lawmakers might fruitfully look to adoption.

In offering this novel analogy, Cassidy was drawing on experience that began in the 1980s, when he had gained some notice as the lawyer for Mary Beth Whitehead—a woman who contracted to serve as a surrogate mother, gave up her child, known as Baby M—and then tried to get the child back. Cassidy argued that

Whitehead could not possibly have known what she was giving up—could not grant informed consent—until she physically held her child after birth. (He lost the case, but he won significant visitation rights for Whitehead.)

Cassidy, who says he had been rather casually pro-choice at the time, began hearing from women who regretted their abortions, and applied lessons from his adoption work to their cases. His analogy—and the women’s grief—claim an equivalence between the born and the unborn.

Cassidy’s vision ended up in South Dakota’s bills in language that pro-choice activists say they have not seen in any other legislation so far. Language in the ban announces that the state is prohibiting abortion to “protect the mother’s fundamental natural intrinsic right to a relationship with her child.” Similar language also appears in an informed consent law, now being fought over in court, that was passed in South Dakota in 2005. Enforced by criminal penalty, the law requires a doctor to tell a woman that the abortion will terminate “her existing relationship and her existing constitutional rights with regards to that relationship”—and requires a doctor to attest belief that the woman “understands.” If ever there was legislation that pushed women into motherhood, this is it.

This contribution to abortion law fits nicely into the patchwork of arguments in South Dakota’s task force report that attempt to draw a picture of women as mothers who cannot but be damaged by the experience of abortion. Even the purported medical claims in the task force report are used to support this notion. Rejecting the finding of the American Psychological Association that abortion has “no lasting or significant health risks,” the report argues that abortion inflicts

*If women aren’t able to choose abortion, someone must be making them do it. Abortion clinics are public enemy No. 1 in this campaign.*

grave psychological injuries on women, including bipolar disorder, depressive psychosis, neurotic depression, schizophrenia, guilt, anger, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicidal ideation. The report finds that women who have abortions are more likely to have substance abuse problems, relationship and sexual problems, and parenting problems. Advocates describe these symptoms as a form of trauma they call post-abortion syndrome (PAS). Significantly, the task force argues that abortion causes PAS symptoms because abortion violates women’s nature: “It is simply unrealistic to expect that a pregnant mother is capable of being involved in the termination of the life of her own child without risk of suffering significant psychological trauma and distress. To do so is beyond the normal, natural, and healthy capability of a woman whose natural instincts are to protect and nurture her child.”

Advocates describe these symptoms as a form of trauma they call post-abortion syndrome (PAS). Significantly, the task force argues that abortion causes PAS symptoms because abortion violates women’s nature: “It is simply unrealistic to expect that a pregnant mother is capable of being involved in the termination of the life of her own child without risk of suffering significant psychological trauma and distress. To do so is beyond the normal, natural, and healthy capability of a woman whose natural instincts are to protect and nurture her child.”

If women are not able to choose abortion, then someone must be making them choose it. And public enemy No. 1 in this campaign—and in the task force report—are abortion clinics, which push women into the procedure without providing them with information on the purported health risks or informing her that “the procedure would terminate the life of a human being.” Indeed, the vision of women as victims, not agents, of choice is



**Perched for a Battle:** South Dakota Planned Parenthood's Kate Looby

so stark that the report asserts that clinics lead unwitting women into acting contrary to their “very nature as a mother”: “It is so far outside the normal conduct of a mother to implicate herself in the killing of her own child. Either the abortion provider must deceive the mother into thinking the unborn child does not yet exist, and thereby induce her consent without being informed, or the abortion provider must encourage her to defy her very nature as a mother to protect her child. Either way, this method of waiver denigrates her rights to reach a decision for herself.”

Responding to the characterization of women as weak, emotional, and confused decision-makers in the task force report and the state’s 2005 informed-consent law—a law justified in part on the grounds that women seeking an abortion might suffer from “an emotional crisis” and “clouded judgment”—minority members of the task force retorted that these legislative findings rested on “a sexist, insulting, condescending, and inaccurate stereotype of women,” and objected to the exclusion of all nonconforming testimony from the task force report. Kate Looby, the South Dakota state director of Planned Parenthood and a member of the task force who walked out before the final vote on the report, is outraged at the paternalism of the women-protective argument. “The idea coming out of the members of the task force [is] that women just really aren’t smart enough to figure out what they want, they need to be told,” says Looby. “And [what] they need to be told is, of course, coercion into the pregnancy.”

Janet Crepps, staff attorney in the domestic program at the Center for Reproductive Rights, says South Dakota has argued that “women are not capable of being informed decision-makers in the context of abortion, which is shocking.” It is “the first time you have a whole legislative body adopting this kind of bad abortion science and this kind of fairly outrageous statement of their view of the proper role of women in society.”

**T**HE WOMAN-PROTECTIVE RHETORIC HAS RICH ANTECEDENTS in the 19th-century campaign to criminalize abortion and contraception. But in the last several decades, it has not been the dominant form of anti-abortion argument. When debate over whether to criminalize abortion erupted in the 1970s, the women’s movement was ascendant and opponents of abortion emphasized the need to protect the unborn, rather than to preserve traditional roles of women.

The woman-protective argument for restricting abortion appeared in the 1980s when a researcher began to analyze abortion responses on the model of post-traumatic syndrome. Powerfully placed anti-abortion activists resisted this shift in emphasis, hoping to keep the moral focus on the unborn. This fight over who was rightly the object of anti-abortion concern reached its height when some leaders of the anti-abortion movement urged President Ronald Reagan’s surgeon general, C. Everett Koop, to make official findings that abortion posed a public-health threat to women, on the model of his anti-smoking campaign. Koop, who was a prominent and passionate opponent of abortion, refused. He judged the new claim mistaken on the grounds that there wasn’t sufficient evidence to decide on abortion’s harm to women—and more: “Abortion was more a moral issue than a medical issue,” Koop reasoned in his 1991 book *Koop: The Memoirs of America’s Family Doctor*. “The pro-life movement had always focused—rightly, I thought—on the impact of abortion on the fetus. They lost their bearings when they approached the issue on the grounds of the health effects on the mother.”

But with the abortion debate deadlocked through the 1980s and 1990s, growing numbers of anti-abortion advocates began to recognize that they needed better ways to speak about the wrongs of abortion to the majority of Americans now concerned about women’s rights. And so anti-abortion advocates experimented with forms of woman-friendly argument that fused women’s rights talk and women’s roles talk into a case against abortion that could claim concern for a woman and her child at the same time. Recalling the genesis of this “new rhetorical strategy,” Frederica Mathewes-Green of Feminists for Life of America—founded in 1972 as an anti-abortion, pro-Equal Rights Amendment organization—recounts “Dr. Jack Willke’s early-nineties project to develop a concise response to the other side’s ‘Who decides?’ rhetoric (you may have seen ‘Love them both’ placards) and the trend of pregnancy care centers to shift focus, changing from storefronts that discourage abortion to full-fledged medical clinics or professional counseling centers.”

The political strategy behind all this is laid out in David Reardon’s 1996 book, *Making Abortion Rare*. (Reardon, whose research on “post-abortion syndrome” is extensively cited in the South Dakota report, writes regularly to advise the anti-abortion movement about how to vindicate its moral and religious convictions in politics and science.) As the title suggests, Reardon delights in flipping his opponents’ frames. The book explains to the anti-abortion movement the importance of addressing women’s interests to persuade “the middle majority [which] is paralyzed by competing feelings of compassion for *both* the unborn and for women.” In the early 1990s, Reardon and his allies advised the movement that it needed to “take back the terms ‘freedom of choice’ and ‘reproductive freedom’ ... to emphasize the fact that we are the ones who are really defending the right of women to make an *informed* choice; we are the ones who are defending the freedom of women to reproduce without fear of being coerced into *unwanted* abortions.” When this rhetoric was added, Reardon reports one anti-abortion activist as saying, “[t]he result has been almost dramatic. ... We are listened to once again.” Today, such rhetoric is the cutting-edge argument

for restricting abortion, and the rallying cry “abortion hurts women” may now be more prevalent in some political and counseling contexts than the claim that abortion is murder.

**I**NDEED, TO LESLEE UNRUH, A DRIVING FORCE BEHIND THE South Dakota ban and the campaign manager of VoteYesfor-Life.com, the abortion-equals-murder argument is worse than useless. “When people stop doing what they have been doing, which has not worked, when they listen to the women speak, then there will be change,” Unruh says. “We can’t count on National Right to Life [Committee] to protect women. The pro-life movement has exploited us.”

It’s for this reason that Unruh takes obvious pride in what’s happened in South Dakota. “The face of this campaign [in South Dakota] has not been dead babies or babies, it’s been the women. I get real angry when people want to come to South Dakota and drive around with pictures of dead babies ... it just infuriates me.”

Unruh, a self-proclaimed feminist, is the founder of the Alpha Center, which counsels what they call “post-abortive” women, and president of the National Abstinence Clearinghouse. In 2004, she says, a South Dakota legislator came to her and said they were having a hard time getting a ban through, “would you come and talk to the legislators.” She lined up 20 women to tell their post-abortion stories. One woman told legislators that she had been violently raped, but that the abortion had been like a second rape. Another said she had tried to kill herself as a result. One legislator, a witness later learned, excused himself and went to

another room to weep. According to Unruh, the legislators were in “shock.” Within a year, the South Dakota Legislature had convened a task force, on which Unruh’s husband sat; two years later, they voted for the ban. Governor Mike Rounds, who had resisted a ban two years earlier, was forced to sign.

Today, many anti-abortion organizations are collecting the testimony of post-abortive women specifically for use in litigation and legislation. The most prominent may be Operation Outcry.

*“We can’t count on National Right to Life to protect women,” says Leslee Unruh, a leader of South Dakota’s ban effort.*

In the early 2000s, the Justice Foundation, a conservative legal organization in San Antonio, Texas, funded by Texas powerhouse James Leininger, set out to upend *Roe* by having Norma McCorvey, the original Jane Roe plaintiff, challenge the validity of the case that bears her pseudonym. To support McCorvey’s case, the foundation’s project Operation Outcry collected more

than 1,000 affidavits, which it submitted in court and in Congress.

McCorvey’s case foundered, but the stories the center collected—and continues to collect through online affidavit forms—have proven invaluable. More than 1,500 of these affidavits were submitted by Justice Foundation Vice President Linda Schlueter in testimony before the South Dakota task force, which noted: “Of these post-abortive women, over 99 percent of them testified that abortion is destructive of the rights, interests, and health

“Does that run on gasoline?  
Dang. Haven’t seen one of those since I was a kid.”



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of women and that abortion should not be legal.”

Such affidavits—from Operation Outcry and other organizations—are ubiquitous in anti-abortion efforts these days. They have been entered into the record of the so-called partial-birth abortion case that the Supreme Court will hear this term. And they have been entered into the record of at least four other state legislatures that took some legislative action abortion bans in 2006: Ohio, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.

Lisa Dudley, described by the liberal Columbus, Ohio, *Free Press* as “a paralegal and traveling witness” for Operation Outcry, has appeared repeatedly. Her testimony includes quotations from the collected affidavits, as well as her own story of a traumatizing abortion when she was 24 which she said led her to drinking, drugs, night clubs “to numb the pain,” uncontrollable crying, and diagnosed depression. She concludes, “If abortion had not been legal, I would have never been in that abortion facility that day. ... Because of the scientific evidence we now have, because of testimony upon testimony of women about how abortion hurt them, because we know it is not good for women and it really isn’t a choice, abortion should no longer be legal.”

SCIENCE, HOWEVER, CONTRADICTS DUDLEY’S CLAIMS. IN July, Democratic Congressman Henry A. Waxman released a report on the “False and Misleading Health Information provided by Federally Funded Pregnancy Resource Centers.” These anti-abortion and “crisis pregnancy centers” (CPCs), according to a March report in *The Washington Post* based on a review of federal records, received more than \$60 million in federal funds between 2001 and 2005 and represent a small fraction of the more than 3,000 centers in North America. According to Waxman’s report, the centers provided “false and misleading” information about a link between abortion and breast cancer, the effect of abortion on future fertility, and the mental-health effects of abortion. Indeed, Waxman’s report details the major government and professional studies that discredit PAS.

Which is why the stories of women are so important. What the PAS movement lacks in scientific credibility, it makes up for with dramatic and often touching stories of individual women who feel it is legal abortion that allowed them to be coerced into giving up pregnancies they wanted to continue. CPCs help women understand that feelings of loss and self-destructive conduct can be traced to unacknowledged guilt over past abortions. In offering suffering women this relief, the CPCs produce meaning. In the process, abortion comes to symbolize women’s disempowerment—and its prohibition promises women healing, protection, maternal recognition, and freedom. “The CPCs are the platform from which they produce ... ‘faux evidence,’” Roger Evans, Planned Parenthood Federation of America’s senior director for public policy litigation and law, put it. “They’re sort of a traveling road show.”

The predicament of women who grieve their abortions does

raise important questions about the forms of counseling available to pregnant women considering abortion—services that neither abortion clinics nor the CPCs may be well suited to provide. And there are pressing questions about the lack of social supports that lead women who want to bear children to abortion.

But criminalizing abortion is not a response, and there is little reason to believe it would provide relief, even to the suffering few. Criminalizing abortion would not, for instance, address the needs of women who seek an abortion because they lacked contraception or were raped or are living in abusive relationship, or will have to drop out of work or school to raise a child alone, or are stretched so thin that they cannot emotionally or financially provide for their other children. Likewise, an informed-consent law that threatens doctors if they do not tell women unproven “facts” about abortion or that would sanction doctors who fail to lecture patients about terminating “the life of a whole, separate, unique, living human being” with whom “the pregnant woman has an existing relationship” may well intimidate women into continuing pregnancies—without ever addressing the reasons a pregnant woman has attempted to avoid or defer motherhood. Indeed, says Planned Parenthood’s director of government relations, Jackie Payne, “The willingness to do wholesale bans with only an exception for life and not for health and not for rape or incest ... is 100 percent against” the idea that they are helping women. “They always start out talking about protecting the woman, but they always end up protecting the fetus.”

The spread of this kind of women’s testimony has dangers far beyond harsh abortion bans like South Dakota’s. It makes more reasonable the coercive informed-consent statute now in the South Dakota courts, which—given the current membership of the Supreme Court—has better chance of legal survival and greater political appeal. What, after all, is wrong in warning women of health harms and ensuring their abortion choices are free and informed? With anti-abortion drafting and incremental litigation strategies, the informed-consent paradigm could turn out to be the Trojan horse that will take down *Roe*.

There is a cautionary message in these testimonies, as well, to supporters of choice—Bill Clinton chief among them—who in recent years have embraced a vocabulary of grief around abortion. There is an ocean of difference between “safe, legal, and rare,” as Clinton put it, and criminal, as in South Dakota. But it is plain that the new progressive emphasis on abortion-as-tragedy will feed right into the woman-protective frame unless the pro-choice camp anticipates its opponents’ arguments and grounds the case for abortion rights in an account of the reasons women need to control the timing of motherhood, and in a broader agenda of progressive family values.

The figure of a woman suffering abortion grief invokes a deep truth about mother love that, in different ways, is recognized by advocates across the political spectrum. But the anti-abortion movement is deploying this image to excite acts of public coercion that will not make women, or their families, more natural or loving or free. **TAP**

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*Reva Siegel is Nicholas deB. Katzenbach Professor of Law at Yale University.*



# MAJORITY CONTROL!



SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

**How to play:** Grab two game pieces, a pair of dice, and try your luck on the hustings!



Good Start! Al Gore Stumps for You! Move Ahead 1 Space



Bad Start! John Kerry Stumps for You! Move Back 1 Space



Local TV Finds Old Clip of You Saying Neville Chamberlain is "Misunderstood"! Move Back 2 Spaces



Cynthia McKinney Punches Opponent! Move Back 3 Spaces



Cheney Visits District, Shoots Senior Citizen! Move Ahead 1 Space

Video Clip of Chamberlain Comment Makes YouTube! Move Back 5 Spaces

Opponent Nabbed in "Hospitality Suite"! Move Ahead 3 Spaces



\$90,000 in Cash Found in Your Freezer! Move Back 5 Spaces

Video Clip of Chamberlain Comment from YouTube Makes FOX! Move Back to State Legislature

Photo Surfaces of Opponent with Bush! Move Ahead 1 Space

Hundreds Die in Terrorist Attack! Move Back 5 Spaces

Hundreds Die in Hurricane! Move Ahead 5 Spaces

Tim Russert Dredges up Editorial You Wrote in High School Urging Dee Snyder Presidential Candidacy! Move Back 1 Space

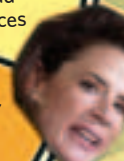
Campaign Diverted by Attempt to Unravel Tom Friedman Metaphor! Lose Turn



Opponent's Campaign Diverted by Attempt to Unravel Tom Friedman Metaphor! Roll Again



Hire Shrum! Game Over



Opponent Dines with Katherine Harris at Citronelle! Move Ahead 2 Spaces

Saddam Admits Role in 9-11! Move Back 7 Spaces



Joe Biden Stops By for "Short Chat"! Lose Turn



Guardian Mounts Letter-Writing Campaign on Your Behalf! Move Back 4 Spaces

Gay Marriage Bans Endorsed by...bin Laden! Move Ahead 4 Spaces



Sprezzatura Limbs Your "Incandescent Genius"! Move Back to Start



Opponent's Last-Minute Attack Ad: As Alderman in 1989, You Missed Meaningless Pro-Israel Vote! Move Back 3 Spaces

Your Last-Minute Attack Ad: In 1977, Opponent Attended Birth of a Nation Screening! Move Ahead 3 Spaces



Opponent's Freudian Slip in Final Debate: Denounces Evolutionary Theories of "Charles Manson"! Move Ahead 1 Space



# THE TEST CASE RACE

*In Ohio, Sherrod Brown is running for the Senate as Thomas Frank's dream candidate. Can economic populism vanquish culture and terror in a red state?*

BY JAMES MCNEILL

THE WORLD HEADQUARTERS OF THE GOODYEAR TIRE AND Rubber Co. is still in Akron, Ohio, but all they make there now are decisions. Except for a few specialty racing tires, Goodyear hasn't made tires in Akron in years. Industry here is dead, dead, dead, and there is nothing we can do to revive it.

Apparently, Sherrod Brown never got that memo from the Atari Democrats. Twenty-five years after the cutting-edge members of his party gave up on quaint ideas like manufacturing and collective bargaining, Brown, a seven-term congressman from northeast Ohio, is running a campaign for Senate that breaks every rule in the New Democrat playbook.

On a cloudless day in August, Brown is holding a press conference on a sidewalk two miles up East Market Street from Goodyear's headquarters. Here in Akron's hollowed-out core, he talks earnestly about rebuilding Ohio's industrial base by investing in alternative energy. He blasts incumbent Republican Senator Mike DeWine and President Bush for having "such a bias toward oil and gas and so little interest in helping with ethanol, helping with solar and wind power."

Brown has been holding dozens of press conferences like this over the course of his campaign. The focus may shift to free-trade or the Medicare drug plan, but the basic message is the same: DeWine and Bush—the two are twins in Brown's world—have ca-

pitulated to corporate interests and abandoned the public interest. "We have seen in our government today that the drug industry is writing the Medicare laws," Brown says, "that Wall Street writes the Social Security privatization proposals, and the oil and gas industry dictates energy policy." That may be fairly standard rhetoric this season for Democrats, but in a speech before family farmers in Columbus, Brown goes on to complain that certain members of his own party have also compromised their principles when they've supported trade bills that cater to big business. "Bill Clinton used to do this and it drove me nuts," he says.

This is the campaign dreamed of by political writers like Thomas Frank and David Sirota, who insist that Democrats can become the majority party again—can win back all those Values Voters—only by returning to the economic populism they abandoned. Brown often sounds like he's quoting directly from Frank's *What's the Matter with Kansas?* Explaining his emphasis on bread-and-butter economic issues, the pro-choice Brown says, "People that might have voted [against me] on choice or ... gay rights are going to say Brown's fighting for us, and that's how we're going to win."

Other Democrats aren't so sure. They fear that Brown's message is just too liberal to appeal to an electorate that went narrowly for Bush in 2004. If Brown wins this high-profile Senate race in a hotly contested battleground state, progressive Democrats will have earned some serious bragging rights. If he loses, the party's centrists can claim that it's time for the people and the powerful to all just get along.

BROWN'S IS A POPULISM OF SUBSTANCE RATHER THAN style. He doesn't do photo ops in duck blinds. That comes as a relief on a miserable summer day in Cincinnati, during the worst of a brutal heat wave. Instead of standing in 100-degree heat clutching a gun, Brown is in the air-conditioned lounge of a local nursing home doing yet another news conference—this one on the failings of the 2003 Medicare prescription-drug law. Four TV crews are here to film the horror stories. One Medicare recipient admits that she's taking dangerously low doses of her meds because they're still unaffordable. A son tells how a private insurer forced his elderly mother into an overpriced drug plan. Brown, who looks more like a genial Rotary Club member than a liberal firebrand, listens intently to each story.

It's hard to find a less jaded member of Congress than the 53-year-old Brown. Instead of going on golf junkets to Scotland, he travels to slums in Central America to meet with impoverished factory workers. Trade has been Brown's signature issue in Congress—he wrote a 2004 book called *Myths of Free Trade: Why American Trade Policy Has Failed*, and he led the fight last year in the House to stop the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), coming within just two votes of blocking it. Brown has also been one of the most passionate congressional opponents of the Iraq War, taking to the floor of the House before the war began to read letters from veterans opposing it.

The conventional wisdom holds that jumping from House to Senate requires less passion and more moderation. But Brown rejects the "Republican-lite" strategy. Some argue that "Mike







**What Can Brown Do for Ohio?:** Sherrod Brown (right) with Democratic gubernatorial candidate Ted Strickland

DeWine's here so I just have to be here," he says, placing his hands so close together there's no daylight between them. "But I'm going to make a sharp contrast between DeWine and me. ... I'm going to say he's been against [raising] the minimum wage, I'm for it. He was for the war in Iraq, I'm against it. ... We'll make the contrast on the energy bill, on stem cells, on issue after issue."

As of Labor Day, his strategy seemed to be working. In late July, a *Columbus Dispatch* poll had Brown eight points ahead, and several more polls since then have shown him maintaining his lead. Ohio State University political scientist Herb Asher sees a precedent for Brown's strategy in the career of Howard Metzenbaum, the long-serving liberal senator from Ohio who retired in 1995. People would wonder, Asher says, "How can Metzenbaum, one of the most liberal people in Washington, get reelected here in Ohio? Part of it was that he didn't run as a liberal. He ran as a populist ... and that's certainly an opportunity for Sherrod Brown." Still, Asher says, given Brown's voting record—he sides with the left-leaning Americans for Democratic Action 94 percent of the time—DeWine has ample opportunity "to make the case that he's too liberal."

**F**OR DEWINE, A 12-YEAR INCUMBENT WHO HAS THE FIFTH-lowest approval rating among all senators, a scorched-earth assault on Brown may be his only hope. Not only does he need to deflect attention from the Bush record, he also needs to distract voters from the corruption scandals plaguing the Ohio GOP. Well before Labor Day, DeWine and the Republicans aired TV spots painting Brown as a tax-raising, terrorist-appeasing extremist. The problem for DeWine is that those attacks aren't resonating with voters the way they once did. The GOP has lost much of its terrorism-fighting advantage since then, and fewer voters cite terrorism as the most important issue for candidates to address. As for taxes, if Democrats can turn that debate into a larger discussion about economic issues, Republicans become extremely vulnerable, especially in the Midwest. A July *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News poll found that only 18 percent of Midwest residents feel they're doing better economically than a year ago, while 43 percent said they're doing worse. That makes the Midwest the most pessimistic region in the country.

In addition, Brown is proving adept at the rapid response.

DeWine's first attack ad, made by the same firm that did the Swift Boat spots against John Kerry, was a soft-on-terror take-down that might have crippled a candidate two years ago. But the Democrats quickly fired back, refuting the charges against Brown and noting that DeWine's commercial had used doctored footage of the Twin Towers. Suddenly, everyone from the *Columbus Dispatch* to *The Daily Show* was talking about Mike DeWine exploiting September 11 for political gain.

In late August, DeWine admitted at a campaign event that his vote in 2002 to authorize the Iraq War was based on bad intelligence, and if he'd known then what he knows now, "it would have been an entirely different situation." Brown immediately pounced, issuing a statement that skewered the incumbent, who sits on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, for having based his Iraq War vote "on inaccurate and unreliable evidence that he had the opportunity and duty to review."

If DeWine fails to gain traction on taxes or national security, there's always the chance he'll go after Brown on social issues. But that could prove awkward for DeWine, who's cultivated a reputation as a GOP moderate. (He was a member of the Senate's bipartisan Gang of 14 that negotiated a truce last year over judicial nominations.) Stressing social issues could also focus unwanted attention on DeWine's flip-flopping on gay marriage. In 2004, DeWine opposed the amendment banning gay marriage that Christian conservatives put on the Ohio ballot, but this summer he backed his party's antigay marriage constitutional amendment. This year, pandering to Ohio's religious right, which is closely linked to embattled GOP gubernatorial nominee Kenneth Blackwell, poses real risks. With Blackwell trailing Democrat Ted Strickland by as much as 22 points in some polls, getting too close to his camp could prove fatal.

While DeWine runs away from Blackwell—there wasn't a single mention of him on DeWine's campaign Web site as of early September—Brown and fellow House member Strickland constantly plug each other's candidacies. They barnstormed the state together during a three-day bus tour in August. The joint appearances offer Brown a bit of political cover, since Strickland's roots in rural Ohio and his background as a Methodist minister give him a more moderate image. But really, given Brown's own background, it's a testament to the times that he might need any cover.

**B**ROWN GREW UP IN THE SMALL NORTH-CENTRAL OHIO city of Mansfield. He inherited his politics from his mother, a New Deal Democrat who at 86 is active in his campaign. But Brown pleased his Republican father as well, becoming an Eagle Scout in 1967 while in high school. While other sons of the 1960s were rebelling against their fathers, Brown and his two older brothers converted theirs. His dad, a family doctor who voted for Goldwater in 1964, ended up pulling the lever for McGovern in 1972. Brown, who was already involved in Mansfield politics before he went away to college at Yale, returned home immediately after graduation in 1974 when the Democratic county chair asked him to make a suicidal run against a local Republican state representative. But after knocking on nearly 20,000 doors, Brown won the seat, and for all but two years he has spent the rest of his adult life in public office, serving in the state legislature for eight years, another eight as Ohio secretary of state, and the rest in Congress.

Despite his lead, Brown hasn't run an error-free campaign. In fact, it nearly self-destructed before it began. In August 2005, after all but formally announcing his Senate candidacy, he unexpectedly backed away from the race. Brown, whose first marriage ended in divorce in 1987, had recently remarried and word filtered from his camp that he was worried about subjecting the new union—he is married to Connie Schulz, a Pulitzer-Prize winning *Plain Dealer* columnist—to the stress of a high-profile campaign. The more cynically minded noted that Brown had considered and then rejected a run against DeWine in 2000 and suggested it was just another case of cold feet.

With Brown apparently out of the race, in jumped Paul Hackett, the Iraq War veteran from Cincinnati who'd thrilled party activists by nearly winning a special congressional election last summer. But soon after Hackett announced, Brown reversed himself and got back in. Suddenly, it looked like the Democrats had a nasty primary fight on their hands. In February, however, Hackett succumbed to heavy pressure from party leaders and withdrew from the race. But he left charging that Brown's campaign had spread ugly rumors about his service in Iraq. An angry Hackett, still in demand on liberal talk radio and the cable news circuit, complained for months afterward. His many fans agreed and filled the blogosphere with rants against Brown.

Many Democrats began to fear that Brown's campaign was floundering. Word spread that he was wasting money on high-priced consultants and that little work was getting done. But just after Hackett got out of the race, Brown hired a new campaign manager, John Ryan, a Cleveland labor leader widely respected for his organizing ability. Soon, the campaign was reconnecting with party activists and building an impressive grass-roots base. Then in early July, Brown and Hackett met and achieved one of those rare political reconciliations that seems to be genuine. Hackett endorsed Brown warmly at a July 10 rally, and since then he has gushed about Brown on MSNBC's *Hardball*, sent out fund-raising letters on his behalf, and talked him up at events across the state.

**H**ACKETT WASN'T BROWN'S ONLY POTENTIAL OBSTACLE. Last year, some state party leaders, unsure of Brown's ability to win, pleaded with President Josiah Bartlet himself—Dayton native Martin Sheen—to enter the race, and it was rumored that Jerry Springer might get in.

In this age of maximum disgust with Washington, it's hard to fight the impulse to go with the outsider—to embrace anyone other than a professional politician, especially one seeking a Senate seat in a red state with Brown's voting record. But if we hope to prove once again that there can be such a thing as good government, maybe it's time to differentiate between the politicians who've been corrupted by Washington and those who've retained their core beliefs and can use the knowledge they've gained in the city to drain the swamp of corruption in the Capitol.

Brown, speaking of the work he did to build a coalition against CAFTA, says, "I think I understand how to do this sort of inside-outside strategy, where you get the public talking to their members of Congress and ... where you end up with a very different public policy as a result." As is his wont, Brown goes on to discuss the many alternative policies he hopes to push—a patriot corporation act that would reward companies that invest in America, fair-trade legislation that would protect the rights of workers in every country. "I know the patriot corporation bill isn't going to happen right now," he concedes. But if he's elected to the Senate, Brown believes he'll be able to spur debates that have been sorely neglected. "Let that debate happen," Brown says. "And more power to the one that wins it." **TAP**

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*Jim McNeill, a journalist in Washington, D.C., is a former managing editor of In These Times and has written for the Chicago Tribune, Dissent and The Baffler.*



## FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Rosie's Place ([www.rosiesplace.org](http://www.rosiesplace.org)) offers the **Kip Tiernan Education and Social Justice Fellowship** in honor of its founder. This 12 month fellowship provides a generous stipend and health benefits and will be awarded annually to an individual who develops and carries out a project that will benefit poor and homeless women. Concept papers due December 1st. Fellowship will be awarded in the spring/summer of 2007. For inquiries and/or application, contact: Fellowship, Rosie's Place, 889 Harrison Avenue, Boston, MA 02118 or [smarsh@rosiesplace.org](mailto:smarsh@rosiesplace.org).





# Whatever It Takes

*Tennessee's **Harold Ford** and Pennsylvania's **Bob Casey** may not be running campaigns to swell liberal breasts. But they're clearly doing what's necessary.*

**BY HAROLD MEYERSON**

## On a sweltering Saturday morning in August,

on the grounds of the old Rutherford County Courthouse just outside Nashville, where a Bible in a glass case is permanently turned to John 3:16, a young politician of considerable urbanity is convincing a crowd of his fellow Tennesseans that he's just a New Age version of a good ol' boy.

Harold Ford Jr., only 36 but already a 10-year veteran of Congress and now the Democratic nominee for the United States Senate seat that Majority Leader Bill Frist is vacating; a graduate of St. Albans School in Washington, D.C., with a bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and a doctorate from the University of Michigan Law School; and acclaimed by *People* magazine in 2001 as one of the 50 most beautiful humans on the planet, begins his remarks by sharing some assessments with the crowd. Bart Gordon, the local Democratic congressman who introduced him, is the member of the state's congressional delegation "who best understands the interplay of politics and policy," Ford says, while Jim Cooper, the congressman from Nashville proper, "is the most cerebral."

"Cerebral," Ford repeats. "I just learned that word," he says, with a quick smile that acknowledges the lengths to which he'll go to perpetuate traditional Tennessee folkways, even a folkway so dreary as the one stipulating that no pol should be caught in public using a \$3 word.

Ford knows the folkways of Tennessee because he's the scion of one of the state's foremost political families, the Memphis Fords. His father was the congressman from Memphis for 22 years before standing down in 1996 so his son could succeed him. A Ford has been elected to the Memphis City Council regularly since 1971. The Memphis Fords are black pols in a heavily black city, but the younger Ford seems cut from different cloth. Plainly, he has been planning a statewide candidacy since he first entered Congress, and probably well before that. His entire political identity has been shaped by the fact that Tennessee has been growing steadily more Republican, conservative, and religious for two decades, and by the fact that only 16 percent of its residents are black. Ain't nobody gonna out-Tennessee him in this race.

Ford is just one of several prominent Democratic senatorial hopefuls running in swing or red states this year—the list includes Sherrod Brown in Ohio, Claire McCaskill in Missouri, James H. Webb in Virginia, Jon Tester in Montana, and Bob Casey in Pennsylvania—endeavoring to craft a message that doesn't estrange potential supporters by stressing the party's liberalism on cultural issues. Some (Brown and Casey particularly) emphasize economic populism. Some (Ford and Casey in particular) accentuate cultural conservatism. Their success, or lack thereof, at the polls this November could provide their party with some badly needed direction in its quest to reach beyond its blue-state base.



**Ford is a campaigner in a class by himself.** What he offers the Rutherford County crowd is a dazzling mix of brilliance and buncombe, high-tech and low crap, delivered with the perfect pitch of the most gifted campaigner the Democrats have had since (I'm not kidding) Bill Clinton. He affirms at a baseline level the purposes of government, which, in their underfunding of veterans' programs, the Republicans seem to have forgotten. "Shame on us if we can't send leadership to Washington that does two basic things—take care of the least among us, and take care of those who sacrificed for us," he says. He assails Republicans for letting spending get out of control: "Balancing the budget [something he supports a constitution amendment mandating] is a good old Tennessee tradition that ought to be practiced in Washington as it is in Nashville."

Noting that he is traveling the state in a bio-diesel-powered pickup truck, he assails President Bush and the Republicans for having no alternative energy policy and for compelling American motorists to fund Islamic states that may be funding terrorists. Though he's supported every free-trade agreement since he's been in Congress (except, just recently, CAFTA), he is running as a born-again nationalist: His campaign was one of the first in the nation to run ads against the Dubai port deal. "We need to control our borders," Ford says, and proceeds to conflate immigration and security issues and the multiplex and Beslan: "We don't want to learn that terrorists came across the border and exploded our movie theaters, or that they've blown up 25 schools in the Midwest."

"I'm with the president when he's right," Ford continues. "I supported him when he went to Afghanistan. I supported him when he stood up to Saddam. But I stood up to him on the Dubai ports deal; I don't support amnesty for illegals." (Ford actually voted for the Sensenbrenner bill in the House.) "Bob Corker [the developer and former mayor of Chattanooga who is his Republican foe] will say, 'Yes, yes, yes, Mr. President,' whether the president is right or wrong. I will bring Tennessee values to bear on these decisions."



***Ford's dazzling mix of brilliance and buncombe suggests the perfect pitch of the Democrats' most gifted campaigner since (no kidding) Bill Clinton.***

"They're gonna say I'm a liberal," he says. "I believe marriage should only be between men and women. I don't know any better; that's how I was brought up. We didn't have any choice. Where I grew up, when you awakened on Sunday, you went to church. ... I learned the faith thing the old-fashioned way! Me, a liberal? I chair the faith-based caucus!"

What's remarkable is that through all this—staking out a position on immigration to Bush's right, arguing that our troops should stay in Iraq but help partition it into three separate states—Ford has the crowd, which after all consists largely of Democrats and substantially of liberals, utterly entranced. He is throwing everything he can at Bush, at Frist, at Corker, from the right, from the left; he's Tennessee, and the Republicans are

the Beltway, and the Democrats gathered at the courthouse are eating it up. They know the state has not elected a Democratic senator since 1988; they know that their own Rutherford County just elected its first Republican county executive ever; they don't know how to stop Tennessee's rightward drift.

Ford's answer to the drift is, to some extent, to follow it. His line of attack isn't entirely devoid of economic populism, but he cloaks these themes in a broader assault. When he assails the Republicans for their obeisance to big oil, he starts with the outrage of gas prices, then mixes in the outrage of global warming and the outrage of sending money to states that help terrorists. But he was one of a small number of House Democrats who voted for the bankruptcy bill; he's supported lowering the taxes on capital gains and estates; he supports raising the retirement age for Social Security to 70. The seniors I speak to at the courthouse, though, are willing to cut him a lot of slack, even on the question of retirement age ("so long as there's a special provision for seniors who can't work," says one retired school teacher).

**Like Harold Ford, Bob Casey,** the Pennsylvania state treasurer and the Democratic challenger to embattled Republican Senator Rick Santorum, is a celebrated junior. His late father, Robert Casey Sr., was governor of Pennsylvania from 1987 to 1995. But while there are real political differences between the two Harold Fords—senior is a conventional African American liberal, junior more a quintessential neo—no such gap separates the Caseys. The old governor was an anti-abortion social conservative and down-the-line trade union economic liberal. So is his son. The only question is whether the younger Bob has the elder Bob's aptitude for winning the big statewide race. Casey remains poised to unseat Santorum, but his lead had diminished by late August from double digits to roughly 5 percent or 6 percent. A Keystone Poll showed that 69 percent of Pennsylvanians had seen Santorum's ads while just 43 percent had seen Casey's—an imbalance soon to end, since Casey has enough money now to be on TV for the duration of the campaign.

The terrain on which Casey is campaigning isn't all that different from Ford's Tennessee. Surprisingly, Pennsylvania hasn't elected a Democratic senator since 1991—Harris Wofford, who lost his seat to Santorum in the 1994 Republican blowout. At the presidential level, Pennsylvania remains a Democratic state, but by ever-narrower margins in each of the past three elections. While Pittsburgh and Philadelphia are Democratic strongholds, and while the upscale Philadelphia suburbs are increasingly Democratic, Republicans clean up in the rest of the state—the so-called "T" (named after its shape), a terrain of long-shuttered steel and textile mills, of small farms and small towns whose Main Streets look pretty much the way they did in the 1940s.

On an uncharacteristically cool August Saturday, Casey is campaigning at the county fairs and union halls in the most

isolated area of the state, the mountainous terrain north of Harrisburg. “The difference between the two parties [in this part of the state] isn’t over abortion or gun control,” says Shannon Bilger, the stout young man who chairs the Mifflin County Democratic Party. “It’s economics. Unlike Santorum, Bob doesn’t support trade agreements that send jobs overseas.” The toll of such agreements is apparent that afternoon when Casey speaks at a steelworker union hall in Lewiston, which is a converted single-family home—appropriate digs for a local whose factory has downsized from 4,500 employees to 700 over the past several decades.

Not that Casey dwells on abortion or guns in his speeches or ads. His positions—anti-abortion, pro-gun, but in both cases

The bulk of Democratic polling this summer has found that the party’s most effective messages concern the economy rather than the war. In surveying white rural voters in particular, a poll conducted this July by the firm of Greenberg Quinlan Rosner for the Democracy Corps found that these voters’ support for Republican House and Senate candidates, to whom they gave a 17-point edge over Democrats in 2004, had diminished to a nine-point lead today, with Democrats actually ahead in the Midwest. Not surprisingly, the poll concluded that to win a hearing from these voters, Democrats needed to affirm such issues as the sanctity of marriage between men and women and not to advocate a precipi-



### ***Casey’s conservative positions on social issues are well known. This frees him to devote the lion’s share of his speeches to economic fairness.***

more moderate than Santorum’s—are well known, since he’s run statewide four times over the past decade (he served two terms as state auditor before being elected treasurer two years ago). This frees him to devote the lion’s share of his speeches to themes of economic fairness.

To a considerable degree, Casey’s message is the same as Ford’s. “We have families that have to travel great distances in rural areas to get their groceries, to get to work, and you’re paying record prices on gas,” he tells the crowd, speaking without a microphone, earnestly and engagingly but with little of Ford’s distinctive fire. “Washington’s answer is to give oil companies more subsidies. We should take those billions of dollars and place them in smart renewable and alternative energy.” He goes on to note that Santorum has been the second largest congressional recipient of oil industry money. And, like Ford, he points to the potential of clean energy industries to create new jobs.

Casey calls for a more activist government than Ford. Noting that Pennsylvania has lost 181,000 manufacturing jobs under Bush, and that 714,000 Pennsylvanians have lost their health insurance during that time, he advocates fair-trade agreements, a higher minimum wage, and more affordable health care, to be funded by restoring higher tax rates on the wealthiest Americans (an increase that Ford supports, too, though he places the emphasis on the need to balance the budget).

Strikingly, Casey says absolutely nothing about the war in Iraq. When a local TV reporter asks him about it later that afternoon, Casey begins by saying how American security in the 21st century requires a doubling of the size of our special forces. Then—like Ford and most Democratic candidates in contested races this year—he criticizes Bush’s conduct of the war (and excoriates Santorum for his failure to hold Bush accountable for it), but declines to set a timetable for withdrawal of forces.

**Do Casey and Ford have the right stuff?** How much social conservatism do Democrats need to recapture the ground they’ve lost with white working-class and rural voters? How much economic populism? And whose support do they lose in the process?

tous withdrawal from Iraq. That done, Democrats could make hay by running on the themes of “stagnant incomes, rising prices, and American jobs being sent overseas.” Pollster Stan Greenberg told me that the survey found that adding a populist spin to the Democrats’ overall economic message did nothing for it among the general public, but boosted Democratic support by 5 percent to 7 percent among white rural voters. The most effective messages had “a strong nationalist component,” Greenberg says, “very strong on issues of trade and immigration.”

With his support for the House immigration bill, Ford certainly is well positioned to exploit his state’s nationalist, if not xenophobic, tendencies, though his support for Wall Street on the trade and bankruptcy questions means that he won’t be sounding some populist themes he otherwise could trumpet. (His closeness to Wall Street also is chiefly responsible for his having raised more than \$750,000 in campaign funds from the New York City area by the midpoint of this year.) Then again, Ford will be able to count on heavy black and Democratic base turnout in any event.

The problem for Casey, says Paul Begala, a Casey campaign consultant, comes in such areas as the affluent suburbs of Philadelphia, “where a lot of Clinton Republicans are pro-choice. Montgomery County women are cross-pressured voters” between their social liberalism and economic centrism. Fortunately for Casey, Santorum’s position on choice is so much more extreme than his that Casey holds a clear lead in polling of the Philadelphia suburbs.

If Casey and Ford win—and are joined by other Democratic candidates like McCaskill and Tester—they will certainly shift the party’s Senate caucus somewhat rightward on cultural issues. By the same token, Casey, particularly if he’s joined by such fellow economic liberals as Ohio’s Brown and Bernie Sanders in Vermont, could well shift the caucus to a clearer advocacy of fair trade. The trade-off is, for many Democratic liberals and constituency groups, not terribly appetizing. But if Democrats are to become competitive again, it is most likely necessary. **TAP**

# A Slight Oversight

*Congressional investigations of the executive branch have been sandbagged by the White House and its allies on Capitol Hill. Can the Democrats revive a lost art?*

BY ROBERT KUTTNER



WHEN SENATE MAJORITY LEADER LYNDON Johnson became vice president in 1961, he persuaded his protégé and successor, Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, to let Johnson continue running the Senate Democratic caucus. The vice president, constitutionally and ceremonially, is Senate president, voting only to break ties. However, no vice president had ever proposed to function as a quasi-senator, much less caucus leader. Mansfield loyally acceded to Johnson's scheme, but the caucus rebelled. According to the official transcript quoted by biographer Robert Caro, Senator Mike Monroney of Oklahoma, a Johnson ally, indignantly warned, "We are creating a precedent of concrete and steel. The Senate will lose its powers by having a representative of the executive branch watching our private caucuses."

Quite so. But what LBJ, the most powerful majority leader in Senate history, could not obtain by persuasion, Vice President Dick Cheney, who never served in the Senate, simply arrogated. Cheney regularly attends Senate Republican caucus meetings, sometimes accompanied by Karl Rove. Just in case Cheney and Rove needed help keeping the caucus in line, the Senate majority leader, Bill Frist, was handpicked by the White House to succeed the ousted Trent Lott.

"It's totally unprecedented," says Democratic Senator Pat Leahy of Vermont. "The caucus is where you candidly discuss when to back the administration and when to adopt a different position." This executive-branch capture of the senatorial Republican Party helps explain how the Bush administration, despite plummeting public support and scandal after scandal, avoids one of the most fundamental of checks and balances—congressional oversight.



Congressional investigative hearings date back to March 1792, when the House of Representatives investigated a disastrously failed military mission into Indian territory, which left some 600 troops dead. President George Washington complied with the House's request for documents. A House select committee faulted the War Department's private contractors for supply failures. Premonitions of Halliburton—except that the Republican Congress has declined to investigate Halliburton.

Despite skirmishes over executive privilege, congressional oversight has been a key part of our system, regardless of which party controlled which branch—until the administration of George W. Bush.

The default of Republicans in Congress is staggering. No ongoing investigations on waste and incompetence at the Department of Homeland Security. Nothing on the vast self-serving mess that is the Medicare prescription-drug program. Nothing serious on the scandals by defense contractors in Iraq, or on Cheney's possible role in securing a \$7 billion dollar no-bid contract for Halliburton, or on his secret energy task force. Nothing on the enforcement default by the Environmental Protection Administration and Occupational Safety and Health Administration. No serious oversight of the FBI. Precious little on the ongoing failure to rebuild New Orleans, or on Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, or the illegal domestic spying, or on the Justice Department's failure to enforce the right to vote. Nothing on the data-mining program that has revived the supposedly discarded John Poindexter plan by the back door.

The first notable breach in this solid wall of complicity with the White House came only in early September when Republicans Chuck Hagel and Olympia Snowe broke with the Intelligence Committee chairman, Bush loyalist Pat Roberts, and voted with

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**Those Were the Days:** Forty years ago, in 1966, Senate Foreign Relations Chairman J. William Fulbright opens intensive investigative hearings on the Vietnam War, as executed by fellow Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson.

Investigative hearings lay the groundwork for eventual reform legislation. The famous Pecora hearings of 1933 and 1934, exposing abuses on Wall Street that helped create the stock market crash, led to the Securities Act of 1933, the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, and the Public Utilities Holding Company Act of 1935. “It took a decade of bipartisan hearings on acid rain, from 1981 to 1990,” says this staffer, “for us to get the Clean Air amendments of 1990.”

Like oversight of the executive branch, serious monitoring of the private sector has also collapsed. “If you don’t want to regulate, don’t do any oversight,” says Dr. Sidney Wolfe, director of the Public Citizen Health Research Group. There is no longer a congressional counterweight to an FDA now entirely beholden to the drug industry. Henry Waxman, as chairman of the Health Subcommittee of Government and Commerce prior to 1995, held dozens of investigative hearings on the drug and tobacco industries. This has ended. Under Republican rule, Chairman Billy Tauzin did have one hearing on tobacco. “They invited the chewing-tobacco people in,” Waxman notes, “to make the case that ‘smokeless tobacco’ is a healthy alternative.”

committee Democrats to force Roberts to make public a confidential report. The report repudiated White House claims of intelligence support for links between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, and criticized the White House reliance on Ahmad Chalabi’s Iranian National Congress. Even so, the committee report ducked the issue of administration manipulation of the intelligence community. This report gives a small glimmer of what checks and balances would be like, with a restoration of normal oversight.

**O**VER THE YEARS, THE MOST EFFECTIVE OVERSIGHT HAS been bipartisan, often with the president’s own party challenging his policies. Senator Harry Truman’s Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program, beginning in 1941, eventually called 1,798 witnesses, held 432 hearings, issued 51 reports exposing procurement corruption, and saved taxpayers nearly \$200 billion in today’s dollars. Truman’s tenacity, far from making him a pariah in his own party, led to his elevation to vice president. The Fulbright Committee’s extended hearings between 1966 and 1971 legitimized doubts about the Vietnam War. Senator Frank Church’s epic hearings into Cold War domestic spying abuses led to the passage of the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act that Bush is now flouting. The Church Committee’s bipartisan investigation let the chips fall, unearthing abuses under Democratic and Republican administrations alike.

“Congressional oversight and investigation isn’t just about the executive branch,” says one senior Democratic aide. “It’s also about the private sector.” Congress has looked into patterns of wrongdoing in industries as diverse as pharmaceuticals, tobacco, banking, and funeral parlors. Until the Gingrich Congress and the K Street Project, such investigations served as a social check and balance, tempering the concentrated economic power of business.

**M**OST SENATE REPUBLICANS ARE PURE LOYALISTS. Intelligence Committee Chairman Pat Roberts does his best to prevent embarrassment to the administration. James Inhofe, who heads the Environment and Public Works Committee, investigates global warming—using witnesses who deny the science. A Senate Banking Committee hearing on the systemic risks of hedge funds called exactly one witness, SEC Chairman Christopher Cox. Senator Chuck Grassley held useful hearings on the Vioxx cover up by Merck nearly two years ago, but despite several other drug-safety scandals, has not held a repeat hearing.

A few GOP committee chairs occasionally make critical noises, only to be battered back by White House pressure. You may have noticed intermittent dissent from Senators Arlen Specter, John McCain, and Susan Collins. Didn’t McCain object to abuses at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib? Wasn’t it Specter who attacked the illegal NSA spying program? And don’t we recall Collins holding hearings on the Katrina debacle? Yes; but while there has been occasional Republican pushback on administration legislative schemes, oversight has mostly fizzled.

Judiciary Chairman Specter is a true moderate—except when the administration squeezes him, which is nearly always. When Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, famous for evading questions, testified last February 6, Specter refused requests to have the witness sworn, as Attorney General Janet Reno regularly was. In response to objections from committee Democrats, Specter offered this double-talk:

“I have asked the attorney general whether he would object or mind and he said he wouldn’t. And I have put that on the record. But the reason I’m not going to swear him in is not up to him. Attorney General Gonzales is not the chairman; I am.”

“Specter gets terrible pressure from Cheney,” says a Demo-

cratic senator. “When Specter threatened to subpoena telephone companies that were cooperating with illegal wiretapping, Cheney snubbed Specter and personally lobbied other Republican members of the committee to block him.” After a few weeks of tough talk, Specter embraced the administration position that Congress should pass a law to legalize the illegal wiretapping under Bush’s power as commander in chief.

McCain worked with fellow Republicans Lindsey Graham and John Warner to make the Army field manual, which respects the Geneva Conventions, the standard for prisoner interrogations. This opposition surfaced again in early September, when the administration proposed legislation overturning the Supreme Court’s June decision holding that its rules for interrogations and trials of detainees violated both the constitution and the Geneva Conventions. However, as we go to press, the Republican dissenters are likely to give the administration most of what it wants.

As chairman of the Indian Affairs Committee, McCain helped expose the Abramoff scandal. But McCain refused to follow the Abramoff trail to money laundering by nonprofits such as Grover Norquist’s Americans for Tax Reform. That subject was referred to the Senate Finance Committee, to be duly buried. Since last spring, a newly docile McCain, looking to 2008, has consummated a well-publicized détente with the administration and its base in the religious right.

Collins, as chair of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, held useful early hearings on the belated and incompetent response to Katrina. But Collins backed off when the administration refused to release embarrassing documents. A year later there have been no serious investigations of the ongoing scandal—the \$3.4 billion on the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) no-bid contracts, the constant shifting of policies on everything from trailers to waste removal to flood insurance, and the failure to expedite rebuilding. Collins also turned down Democratic requests for hearings on Halliburton. Oklahoma Senator Tom Coburn has held some field hearings critical of FEMA and the Army Engineers. But these are not backed up by investigations and subpoenas. “If there’s anything that might embarrass the White House,” says Leahy, “they just won’t do it.”

**T**HE HOUSE DISPLAYS EVEN MORE ABJECT COLLUSION with the administration. In June 2005, at a hearing on reauthorization of USA Patriot Act, Judiciary Chairman Jim Sensenbrenner abruptly turned off the microphones and walked off with the gavel when committee Democrats raised questions about Guantanamo.

Occasionally, an experienced ranking Democrat such as Waxman, of the Government Reform Committee, or John Dingell,



***“We wanted to bring whistleblowers,” says ranking Democrat Henry Waxman, “but Chairman Davis refused to allow that.”***

on the Energy and Commerce Committee, will shame his Republican chairman into holding an effective hearing or launching a joint investigation. An investigation initiated by Dingell’s Democratic staff led to a bipartisan committee report on conflicts of interest at the National Institutes of Health, where a senior researcher named Trey Sunderland was paid more than \$500,000 by Pfizer for tissue samples collected at \$6 million of taxpayer expense. Despite requests by Democrats, the committee ignored oil pipeline safety until the recent BP disaster in Alaska.

Waxman’s staff prepared a blistering report on FEMA lapses. Two days before a scheduled hearing, Waxman offered it to Chairman Tom Davis, who adopted it as the bipartisan committee report with minor changes. But the hearing itself lasted just one day, and Davis has resisted deeper digging. Democratic pressure did induce the committee to hold two days of hearings on government contracting. “We wanted to bring whistleblowers, but Chairman Davis refused to allow that,” Waxman says.

**F**ROM 1997 TO 2002, REPUBLICAN COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN issued more than 1,000 subpoenas, and no alleged sin was too trivial. Wielding subpoenas, the Republican House took 140 hours of testimony on whether Clinton had abused his Christmas card list for fund-raising purposes. By contrast, the House spent a total of 12 hours on Abu Ghraib, with one subpoena issued by Connecticut Congressman Chris Shays.

Since 2001, congressional subpoenas have been rare and mostly directed far from the White House. On March 18, 2005, Chairman Davis subpoenaed Michael Schiavo “to testify and produce things, including hydration and nutrition equipment related to the care of Theresa Schiavo.” Two weeks later, her death intervened.

The Republican House enthusiastically used subpoenas in made-for-TV spectacle hearings, such as the Major League Baseball steroids affair. In his ongoing harassment of the United Nations, Henry Hyde, chairman of the House International Relations Committee, subpoenaed documents from former staffers of Paul Volcker’s inquiry into the United Nations’s oil-for-food program in Iraq. Even *The Wall Street Journal* found this fishing-expedition excessive. “The Volcker Committee will be crippled if it cannot guarantee its witnesses—many of them not beyond reproach—that their confidential testimony won’t end up being aired on C-SPAN as part of a Congressional hearing,” the *Journal* editorialized.

One rare exception is Shays, chairman of the Governmental Reform Subcommittee on national security. Shays, a moderate facing a tough re-election, has used or threatened subpoenas to get the Pentagon and the Federal Reserve to disclose information about scandalous lapses in Iraqi oil revenues and retaliation

tion against whistle-blowers in the Abu Ghraib affair, among other hearings. If Shays loses his seat, ironically, it will be because of the overly close identification of the rest of the House GOP with the administration.

In the Senate, an island of bipartisan cooperation is the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, where Chairman Norm Coleman, has run joint investigations with ranking Democrat Carl Levin, most recently a probe into exotic forms of tax evasion.

**W**HAT MIGHT DEMOCRATS DO AS THE MAJORITY? A preview is found in the work of legislators like Waxman, John Dingell, and Senator Byron Dorgan who, despite lacking subpoena power or Republican cooperation, have used their limited powers to run extensive investigations.

Dorgan, who chairs the Democratic Policy Committee (DPC), runs a kind of oversight committee in exile. The committee, with just two staff investigators and no subpoena power, investigated contracting abuses in Iraq and in the Katrina region; pre-war intelligence failures; the Medicare drug program's "donut hole" of non-coverage; continuing homeland security vulnerabilities; covert propaganda by federal agencies to advance political agendas; and the failure to enforce environmental laws. One Dorgan hearing used whistle-blowers to expose how Halliburton, under contract to provide drinking water to troops in Iraq, often supplied contaminated water. In July, the DPC completed an exhaustive study of Halliburton abuses, drawing on whistle-blowers and public contracting records. The

committee found that the Parsons Corporation received a no-bid contract to build 142 clinics in Iraq; it built 20.

Waxman's numerous staff investigations include a superb report on contracting abuses, titled "Dollars, not Sense," on the explosion of contracting out basic functions of government and the proliferation of no-bid contracts. It exposes as a lie the administration's claim that the Office of the Secretary of Defense was not involved in Halliburton's sole-source contracts. Waxman documents 118 federal contracts worth \$745.5 billion "found by government officials to include significant waste, fraud, abuse, or mismanagement, and reveals that fully 40 percent of all domestic discretionary spending is now contracted out."

**A**S DILIGENT AS THESE QUASI-OFFICIAL INVESTIGATIONS are, they cannot demand confidential evidence or compel testimony. Though they often dig much deeper than the cursory hearings by the Republican Congress' standing committees, they tend not to be taken as seriously by the press. And while these informal hearings have sometimes featured whistle-blowers willing to go public, they cannot protect confidential sources inside federal agencies. "If you're conducting a serious investigation," explains another longtime House investigator, "you'll meet with the whistle-blower and plan strategy so that they're protected. Maybe you'll subpoena several other people and lots of other documents, so that your source is testifying under orders and is not revealed as the source. You can't do this when you're in the minority."

## Hillary Rodham Clinton

### Polarizing First Lady

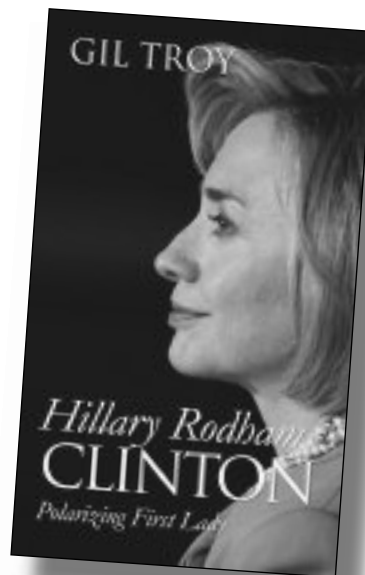
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In a Democratic Congress, three categories of investigation and oversight cry out for action:

**I. How Is Government Being Run?** Under this heading, leading candidates include:

- **Domestic Security.** The colossal waste, mismanagement, and failure to set the right priorities at the Department of Homeland Security.
- **Privatizing Government.** The costs, lack of accountability, outright fraud, and inappropriate use of contractors to carry out necessarily public functions.
- **Sweetheart Deals.** An immense amount of government social outlay now is designed primarily for the enrichment of private industry—everything from the Medicare drug program to the student-loan program to low-income housing. A series of “waste, fraud and abuse” hearings on this broad topic could also make the case that government functions are often more efficiently run by government.
- **The Taxman.** The administration has shackled the IRS’s ability to go after big tax cheats and now wants to hire private bill collectors, on commission, to go after small taxpayers. Hundreds of billions of dollars of taxes owed by the richest are uncollected every year because of deplorable administration and deliberately backwards priorities.
- **Katrina.** How has the rebuilding of New Orleans been so badly bungled?
- **Faulty Intelligence.** The serial failures of the 17 executive-branch intelligence agencies, including the failure to act on reforms proposed by the bipartisan 9-11 Commission. The Center for American Progress recently released a superb study, “No Mere Oversight,” on how Congress has dropped the ball, and what is needed.
- **The Environmental Default.** The EPA under Bush is a textbook case of putting industry people in charge of failing to enforce the law. Similar derelictions occur across the range of consumer and labor protections, including systematic failure to enforce the Wagner Act.

**II. Private-Sector Abuses and Social Conditions.** Corporate America has gotten a free ride from this administration. Congress should investigate:

- Continuing conflicts of interest on Wall Street.
- Systemic risks to the financial system, such as unregulated and highly speculative hedge funds and derivatives.
- The structure of drug-industry pricing, patent abuse, profiteering, conflicts of interest, and capture of academic research.
- How America’s trade policy promotes outsourcing and encourages industry to work with foreign governments to export vital technology and depress domestic wages.
- The crisis in the health-care system.
- The looting of American workers’ pensions.
- The sources of the growing income inequality in America.
- The shifting of economic risks from corporations and government to individuals and families.
- Abuses in consumer credit.

**III. Administration Constitutional Excesses.** Leaving impeachment aside, the administration’s abuse of office demands investigation on multiple fronts:

- Illegal domestic spying and liberties during wartime. We need a full investigation comparable to Frank Church’s to establish what kind of domestic spying Congress means to legalize, and with what constitutional safeguards.
- The extra-constitutional use of “signing statements” to contravene legislation.
- The silent coup by the Office of the Vice President.
- Politicization of civil service and of science policy. The administration has extended its ideological tentacles into the ordinary work of government—everything from government statistical agencies to civil-rights enforcement and biomedical research.
- Misuse of intelligence to trump up the case for the Iraq War; the political takeover of intelligence by the secretary of defense.
- The failure to prevent 9-11 and the diversion of resources from Afghanistan and al-Qaeda to Iraq.

**D** ORGAN AND OTHERS HAVE PROPOSED A NEW TRUMAN Committee to explore waste in defense contracting. Ted Kennedy wants hearings on abuses in the Sallie Mae program, which uses student loans as a cash cow for banks. “They should take the \$4 to 6 billion every year in excess profits and pass it along to students,” he says.

Kennedy also wants hearings on the politicization of the civil-rights division of the Justice Department, where it took the Bush administration more than five years to bring a single voting discrimination suit on behalf of an African American, and where the Justice Department has colluded with Republicans to narrow the right to vote, with opinions upholding Georgia’s notorious photo-ID requirement (later struck down in court) and Ken Blackwell’s dubious vote-suppressing maneuvers. Instead of protecting the rights of Americans to be free from discrimination in voting, employment, and housing, the division’s lawyers have mainly brought cases on issues dear to the religious right, notably sexual trafficking and litigation promoting state-supported religious observance.

Should the Democrats take back Congress, it will be by the slenderest of margins. With Bush having a veto pen, Democratic legislative accomplishment is improbable until at least 2008. Other than blocking really bad legislation, oversight will be the whole ballgame. But oversight can lay the groundwork for future legislation and reform—and can change perceptions of the necessary role of government and its management.

The White House and its allies contend that Democrats are just hoping to pursue partisan payback. Some ranking Democrats, like John Conyers, who would chair the Judiciary Committee, have openly spoken of impeachment. Other leading Democrats, like Robert Reich writing in these pages, have urged the party to emphasize only a positive agenda looking forward. But our constitutional system is now so badly distorted that the right can’t tell the difference between retaliation and restoration of normal, constitutional checks and balances. Says Waxman, using what was once a patented Republican phrase, “Most of it is about waste, fraud, and abuse.” **TAP**

# THE WAY OF THE

# HAMMER

**Democrats have been outraged by Tom DeLay's tactics. But if they take back the House, the lesson to learn from him is this: Hyper-partisanship can be good for the party of government.**

**BY SAM ROSENFELD**

**I**T WAS A SUMMER OF ODD POLITICAL VALEDICTORIES. ON the night of August 8, Joe Lieberman bade farewell to his career as a Democratic senator, kicking off of his independent bid by blaming the “politics of partisan polarization” for doing him in. He asked citizens “fed up with the petty partisanship in Washington” to support his independent campaign.

Two months earlier, on June 7, another politician had offered a very different analysis of the current era. In his farewell speech on the floor of the House of Representatives, disgraced former Majority Leader Tom DeLay spoke of those same conditions of polarization and partisanship. “In preparing for today,” DeLay said, “I found that it is customary in speeches such as these to reminisce about the good old days of political harmony and across-the-aisle camaraderie, and to lament the bitter, divisive partisan rancor that supposedly now weakens our democracy. Well, I can’t do that.” What followed was an elaborate defense of political par-

tisanship—“not a symptom of democracy’s weakness but of its health and strength.” Those who take ideology and policy seriously, DeLay argued, welcome political combat. “[C]ompromise and bipartisanship are means, not ends,” he said. “It is not the principled partisan, however obnoxious he may seem to his opponents, who degrades our public debate, but the preening, self-styled statesman who elevates compromise to a first principle.”

Liberals have no love for DeLay. But honest ones reading that last, killer line—and thinking for a moment of the unctuous senator from Connecticut—should admit: This time, the Hammer nailed it.

If DeLay’s political legacy—extreme when it adhered to actual conservative ideological tenets, merely corrupt and venal when it frequently veered away from them—is odious to liberals, his institutional legacy would seem nearly as lamentable. Over 12 years, Republicans have carried out a remarkable (if incomplete)



transformation of Congress into a ruthlessly partisan legislating body, in which the minority party is shut out of the process as a rule, power is heavily concentrated in the party leadership, and deliberation, compromise, and basic civility are left on the scrap heap. The situation represents a stark deviation from the American norm—a tradition of weak parties, decentralized power sources, and procedural cumbersomeness. And it has elicited howls of outrage from both Democrats and from nonpartisan observers who came up through a very different era.

But liberals, as opposed to Democrats, have some reason to dissent from the outrage. There is a strong case to be made that the neoparliamentary thrust of the trends that Republicans have either initiated or accelerated offers opportunities that the party of activist government is better suited to exploit. The 20th-century era of towering committee barons, of coalitions and deal-making, of legislation slowed to a crawl through procedural impediments meant to foster “deliberation”—the arrangements whose disappearance Lieberman lamented—in fact offered a terrible institutional arrangement for the prospects of liberal reform. Conservative Republicans have reversed some of those arrangements in ways *conducive* to the prospects of liberal reform. This is not merely an irony to note. It’s an opportunity to be seized.

**Changes made by Republicans are actually conducive to liberal reform. This is not just an irony to note. It’s an opportunity to be seized.**

As political scientist Barbara Sinclair shows, the proportion of House votes in which a majority of Democrats voted against a majority of Republicans increased by half from the 1969-1980 period to 1990-2004; within that latter period, party cohesion on votes reached averages of about 90 percent. And between 1975 and 2004, the ideological distance between the two parties in the House (using the so-called Poole-Rosenthal measurement of ideology) expanded by nearly 50 percent.

**W**HINING ABOUT PARTISAN RANCOR IN WASHINGTON is a stale cliché, but like a lot of clichés, it’s true: Partisanship actually *is* more severe now than it used to be. As political scientist Barbara Sinclair shows, the proportion of House votes in which a majority of Democrats voted against a majority of Republicans increased by half from the 1969-1980 period to 1990-2004; within that latter period, party cohesion on votes reached averages of about 90 percent. And between 1975 and 2004, the ideological distance between the two parties in the House (using the so-called Poole-Rosenthal measurement of ideology) expanded by nearly 50 percent.

Analysts debate the reasons for this development—gerrymandering, geographical “sorting” along ideological lines, the conservative movement, even rising economic inequality—but everybody agrees that the central cause was the partisan realignment of the South. The exodus of the Dixiecrats depleted the Democratic Party of an ideologically conservative wing while ensuring closer numerical parity between the two parties. The institutional effects in Congress of growing partisan polarization began occurring in step with the unfolding regional process of realignment. By the 1980s, party-line voting began increasing significantly.

That decade also saw the first real signs of polarization’s effect on the *structures* of power in Congress. In the old days, congressional party leaders had enjoyed little power (exceptions, like Lyndon Johnson, bucked the norm through sheer personal will). But Watergate-era reforms pushed by liberals and north-

erners had served to smash the absolute authority of the (disproportionately southern and conservative) committee chairmen. By the 1980s, an increasingly ideologically coherent Democratic majority began to support measures centralizing power in the party leadership. More bills were passed under “suspension of the rules,” and floor activity was reined in. Speaker Jim Wright accelerated the use of such hard-line practices in the late 1980s, famously provoking the outrage and indignation of the Republican minority when he kept the clock running—once—for an extra 15 minutes on a vote.

That incident was famous in its day, but it has gained a newfound notoriety in retrospect for its delicious irony: The same Republicans who cried foul at Wright’s gambit eventually took over Congress, and they have employed the same tactics to an exponentially greater extent. House Republicans kept the vote open nearly three hours past the limit during the early morning vote for the Medicare drug bill in 2003, and that was hardly an outlier. A recent House Rules Committee minority staff report, “Broken Promises: The Death of Deliberative Democracy,” goes to exhaustive lengths to document the abuse: midnight voting, minority members shut out of conference committees, the use of “emergency” procedures for routine lawmaking, bills put to a vote under “closed rule” (meaning no amendments allowed).

Moreover, from Day 1 of the Republican Revolution, party leaders in the House moved to centralize power in the leadership. Changes originally pushed by Speaker Newt Gingrich ended strict seniority procedures for determining committee ranks among GOP members and placed term limits on committee chairmanships. As effective control of the House passed from Gingrich to DeLay, committees were brought even more plainly under leadership’s thumb. DeLay stripped members of chairmanships (Chris Smith of the Veterans Affairs Committee most recently) or blocked members from ascending to them as punishment for going off the reservation. Speaker Dennis Hastert has explicitly stated that he considers it part of his duty to push only legislation that is supported by a “majority of the majority”—a majority, that is, of his Republican caucus. In a constitutional system that requires any bill to jump a large number of hoops in order to become legislation, the changes Republicans have initiated constitute a dramatic effort to push against these institutional biases. The result has made the House, in Sinclair’s words, “a lean, mean partisan legislative machine,” with attributes that have invited comparisons to parliamentary systems.

The GOP-controlled Senate, meanwhile, though still comparatively decentralized, has moved in the same direction. Committee chairmen, no longer determined by strict rules of seniority, are expected to toe the party line, and partisanship has become central to Senate lawmaking in ways it wasn’t before. Moreover, Republicans have brought enormous pressure to bear on customs and institutions that have long made the Senate uniquely cumbersome and treacherous terrain for legislation—most importantly, the filibuster. Republicans’ 2005 determination to exercise the “nuclear option” to ban judicial filibusters was as dramatic a sign as any of the basic changes the Senate has undergone under Republican rule.



**T**HE RESPONSE TO ALL THIS FROM BOTH INTERNAL AND external observers has been predictable. Democrats suffering the ruthless abuse of a tyrannical and exclusionary majority party have cried foul, in increasingly dire tones. Language venerating America's glorious constitutional system permeates congressional Democratic refrains about the majority's "abuse of power." Last year's fight in the Senate over the "nuclear option" took that pattern to a new extreme when Democrats resisting the GOP's gambit articulated a full-bore celebration of the filibuster, that tool perhaps best known in American history for blocking passage of civil-rights bills.

Outside observers' responses have been similarly alarmed. *Washington Post* reporter Juliet Eilperin's new book *Fight Club Politics: How Partisanship Is Poisoning the House of Representatives* terms the House "dysfunctional" because moderates have been squeezed out of the process and incivility among members is rampant. The venerable Congress scholars and old-school institutionalists Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein have teamed up to offer a critique of the legislative branch that is more substantive than Eilperin's but similar in outlook. In *The Broken Branch: How Congress Is Failing America and How to Get It Back on Track*, the authors, to their credit, emphasize that polarization has real structural and demographic causes, and isn't the result merely of contemporary politicians being mean.

The authors are persuasive in several respects. But perspective matters. Ornstein and Mann write as self-avowed "institutional partisans" rather than ideologically influenced analysts. But in theirs as in so many similar critiques, ideological presumptions are unmistakable. They are alarmed at "the gradual collapse of the center in Congress, as the parties became more homogenous by shredding sizable shares of their moderates and moving toward the respective ends of the ideological spectrum." They also lament the replacement of members who care about "compromise" and "institutional health" with "activists" and "ideologues."

Is this really a complaint a liberal would, or should, share regarding the Democratic Party? Much of the evidence the authors marshal for institutional decline and dysfunction in Congress is more sensibly interpreted by liberals as illustration that *the Republican Party is malign*—committed to an agenda that prioritizes corporate interests over the common good. The remedy to GOP misrule is not institutional reform but political defeat for the misrulers.

**I**NDEED, LIBERALS MIGHT ASSESS FUTURE DEMOCRATIC RULE of Congress not with a commitment to specific, abstract principles of process and democratic theory, but rather with an eye toward policy outcomes. From this perspective, a truth emerges: The changes Republicans have wrought in power are, in the long run, better suited to liberals, because the ideology of activist government stands more to gain than conservatism from institutions that allow for easier passage of new laws.

This was the original belief of postwar liberal Democrats in the previous century, who, in an underappreciated irony documented by historian Julian Zelizer, spent the 1950s and 1960s pushing for many of the same changes that conservative Republicans have attempted or achieved in the last decade: curbing

committee chairs' power, centralizing authority in the party leadership, eliminating the filibuster, and more. As Zelizer put it, liberals inside and outside of Congress "believed in strong centralized parties as offering the best hope for a strong federal government."

Their critique was specifically borne of frustration with the southern Democrats who had taken control of the committee process by the late 1930s. But the broader connection they identified between the decentralized committee system and inaction on various progressive fronts—from civil rights to labor law to health care—was well founded. It was also buttressed by the postwar political science establishment, which issued a famous report in 1950 calling for a system of two "responsible parties"—cohesive, centralized institutions, each committed to a coherent and distinct national policy agenda. This is a forgotten history that liberals would do well to mine.

If one merely accepts two claims—that a streamlined legislative process helps whichever party holds power, and that simply hoping for Republicans to reform their behavior and revive



**If They Had a Hammer?:** The possibly future majority leaders

traditions of bipartisan compromise is daft—the case for Democrats approaching their return to power in 2007 or 2009 or 2011 with a mind toward DeLay-style parliamentary ruthlessness is clear. But given basic truths about social policy, one can make an even stronger positive claim: Liberalism will benefit *more* from such arrangements than conservatism.

An enormous amount of political science literature has shed light on an empirical fact of modern welfare states: Expansions of broad-based social insurance and welfare-state programs, once enacted, prove virtually impossible to roll back. Middle-class entitlements and social policies produce constituencies that, in turn, provide those programs with immense political durability. This explains the famous invulnerability of Social Security and Medicare to political assault (reconfirmed by the GOP's disastrous privatization campaign last year).

The trick is to get them enacted in the first place. And the American legislative process, by the Founders' deliberate design, makes it more difficult to pass new laws than virtually any other advanced democracy in the world. It is not a coincidence that the United States has always also had a comparatively weaker welfare state than other advanced democracies. Public majorities in

the United States have expressed support for a national health-care system for decades, for example, yet every single effort to enact such a system has crashed on the shoals of Congress. Why? Because the extensive array of veto points and cumbersome requirements placed along the American legislative obstacle course—the committee process, required passage in two legislative chambers, the counter-majoritarian features of both chambers, the presidential veto—have enabled vested interests opposing such a reform to kill legislation time and again. As political scientists Sven Steinmo and Jon Watts put it in 1994, reflecting on the wreckage of Hillarycare, the United States lacks universal health care because “American political institutions are structurally biased against this kind of comprehensive reform.”

They went on to make a broader claim: “The game of politics in America is institutionally rigged against those who would use government.” Rather, *was* rigged: What is indeed curious about the contemporary scene is that *conservative Republicans* have been the ones who have worked diligently to reverse many of the institutional features that have historically served to limit government activism in America. And thus have the conservative neoparlamentarians done some of liberalism’s prep work for it.

**E**NOUGH ABSTRACTION. WHAT KINDS OF POLICIES ARE ACTUALLY in the offing, should Democrats reclaim power and bolster the neoparlamentary tendencies of the GOP? The Democrats’ proclaimed agenda includes reforming the Medicare drug entitlement, funding alternative energy initiatives, and passing a minimum wage hike. Realistically, however, the next two years of divided government following a Democratic congressional takeover in November would offer little opportunity for major legislative achievements. The neoparlamentary approach is really viable only during periods of unified government—and it’s not beyond imagining that such a moment could happen as early as 2009.

**Reid and Pelosi have actively sought to forge sharp contrasts with the GOP, much like the opposition in a parliamentary system.**

In that context, party discipline, pressure brought to bear on committee chairs and other independent sources of power, coordination between a Democratic presidential administration and congressional leadership behind a legislative agenda, a disposition toward minimizing impediments to legislative action (including extensive amendments and open debate), and a recourse to including minority party participation primarily when such inclusion is *instrumentally useful* for passing legislation could all spell the difference between success and failure. Down the road, two other policies of enormous consequence may require such an approach. Labor-law reform—particularly the official sanctioning of card-check unionization procedures—could fundamentally bolster the cause of the American labor movement. And sooner rather than later, health care will return to the fore.

Are there signs that Democratic leaders will sustain the strong-arm partisan practices of their GOP oppressors? The indications are mixed. Clearly, Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid—for

all the carping about indecisiveness and disunity that continues to plague the party—preside over congressional Democratic caucuses that are more cohesive than perhaps ever before. Both leaders, moreover, have actively sought to bolster those tendencies and forge stark contrasts with the ruling party in much the manner of the opposition in a parliamentary system.

They have also made more concerted efforts than their predecessors to keep their caucuses in line. Eilperin recounts with horror the notable 2004 incident when Pelosi came very close to stripping conservative Democrat Collin Peterson’s ranking membership on the Agricultural Committee for failure to pay his dues to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. The year after that she replaced moderate Ben Cardin with Sander Levin on the Social Security subcommittee of House Ways and Means because Levin was considered a more reliable point person for the caucus’s uncompromising pushback against privatization. And when the new Congress convenes in January, Jane Harman may no longer be the top-ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, after one too many ventures in the direction of capitulation to the majority.

At the same time, Democrats have a respect for the traditions of the institution that is at least partly genuine. Paeans to the august, deliberative Senate and the democratic “people’s House,” however opportunistic they may be as minority boilerplate, actually resonate with many in the party. There’s strong indication that, in the event of a takeover, Pelosi would be inclined to disperse power to the many veteran Democrats of her generation who would ascend to the key committee positions—particularly on Appropriations, which Pelosi had originally used as a base of power and fund raising when ascending the leadership ranks. “Pelosi owes her power to Appropriations,” one Democratic House aide put it to me. “She’s wedded to that process—to the committee process. She would still be if she became speaker.”

For what it’s worth, moreover, Democrats certainly *claim* they’ll soften the partisan rancor and majority ruthlessness if they take control in Congress. Pelosi told *CongressDaily* in May that she intended “to come as close as you can in the political reality to a bipartisan management of the House,” while highlighting House Democrats’ proposed Minority Party Bill of Rights. Such rhetoric serves obvious political purposes (Republicans sounded the same notes prior to their 1994 takeover). Whether such claims are offered in bad faith remains to be seen.

Democrats’ behavior may depend in part on the signals and expectations they perceive to be coming from constituents, observers, and activists. It’s that last category that could stand a bit of reeducation in the tradition of liberal reformers who venerated partisanship as a positive good. This is, after all, ultimately an argument for liberals to have *confidence* in their own ideology—and to become re-acclimated to a basic comfort with power. Tom DeLay, for all his egregious faults, was a man who took political struggle seriously and respected his ideological adversaries. As he put it in his farewell speech, “Liberalism, after all, whatever you may think of its merits, is a political philosophy and a proud one with a great tradition in this country, with a voracious appetite for growth.” It’s past time that liberals reclaimed as their own the institutional mechanisms to feed that appetite. **TAP**

# Culture & Books

*"The most helpful answer to the question 'What's Wrong With the Democrats?' may be the least intellectually satisfying."*

— PAGE 53



## CULTURE

### THE SPIRIT OF '56

*Liberal baby boomers cherish the notion that 1968 was the year that America got interesting and weird. Nonsense—1956 had it all, man.*

BY J. HOBERMAN

AMERICA TURNS 50 THIS YEAR—the America, that is, that we recognize as ours. It was half a century ago that our new founding fathers made their debut on the national stage: Martin Luther King Jr., John F. Kennedy, Elvis Presley. The latter, per *Life's* August 27, 1956, issue, was “Elvis—A Different Kind of Idol”: a different idol for a different America.

The chronicler—or maybe even the Tom Paine—of this new New World was the 31-year-old Swiss-born photographer Robert Frank. “I am photographing how Americans live, have fun, eat, drive cars, work, etc.,” Frank wrote to his parents.

From December 1955 through the summer of 1956, Frank crossed and re-crossed the continent, driving south from New York, out to California, and back east through the Midwest, stopping in Chicago for the Democratic National Convention. It was there that a handsome young senator who was not yet well known to the wider public, John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts, was put forth as a candidate for vice president; although another senator got the nod, Kennedy was tabbed as a political Elvis—front-runner for the 1960 nomination.

Frank photographed Detroit autoworkers; Hoboken, New Jersey, politicians;

New York City drag queens; the workday crowd on New Orleans’ Canal Street; Oral Roberts on television. His subject matter encompassed rodeos, picnics, funerals; he specialized in solitary lunch counters and empty highways. Frank was the first to document the Strip—the ubiquitous yet ignored, nowhere but everywhere, a democratic realm at once concrete and allegorical of billboards, drive-ins, and gas stations. A vanguard beatnik, he completed his road trip ahead of the 40,000-mile interstate highway system authorized by Congress, as well as *Time's* assertion that such highways were “really the American art ... a true index of our culture.”

BY COMPARISON TO PREVIOUS PHOTO-travelogues, Frank’s paid striking attention to black, as well as white, America—separate and unequal. His signature photograph “Trolley-New Orleans” pondered a succession of Americans on their journey through life, faces framed through the vehicle’s windows, and blacks confined to the rear seats. It was while Frank was on the road that, less two years after the Supreme Court ruled school segregation unconstitutional, the Montgomery bus boycott led by Martin Luther King Jr. initiated the resistance against American apartheid.

*Time* first reported the boycott in mid-January; there were segregationist riots in nearby Tuscaloosa, where Autherine Lucy—the first black student to attend the University of Alabama—was banned from campus for what the university’s board termed her own safety—and King’s home was bombed in January. By the end of the month, he was booked, along with almost 100 other civil-rights leaders, for violating the state’s anti-boycott law. By now, Montgomery had become an ongoing national news story and King’s indictment would make front-page headlines. Even network television



was covering the boycott and the arrests.

The whole world, as would later be said, was watching, and the context was global: An ABC commentator compared the Alabama protests to those led by Gandhi against the British in India. King himself made the point more forcefully, implicitly linking the civil-rights movement to the previous year's Bandung conference of Third World nations, when he told a mass meeting that, part of "a great moment in history," the Montgomery boycott was "bigger than Montgomery" and that the protesters were part of global movement: "The vast majority of the people of the world are colored, [and] up until four or five years ago [most] were exploited by the empires of the west."

The so-called Third World continued to find its voice. In mid-July, Jawaharlal

Beginning with a column by its managing editor, the newspaper frankly acknowledged the tumult convulsing world communism, giving space to both Stalin's attackers and defenders (as well as those seeking a middle position).

The Old Left was dead; the New Left, not yet born. It was a moment for manifestos. In early March, Allen Ginsberg began running off mimeographed copies of "Howl," the barbaric yawp with which he had presented several months earlier to the beatnik audience at a San Francisco poetry reading. Around the same time Ginsberg's countercultural samizdat appeared, "Blue Suede Shoes" became the first record to reach the top of the pop, R&B, and country music charts. As self-assertive in its way as "Howl," albeit declaring the singer's sartorial independence,

terms: The time was ripe for "a white boy who could sing like a Negro" and, as if answering Phillips' prayer, an 18-year-old Mississippi-born guitar-playing truck driver materialized in his studio—the first and greatest of White Negroes, to appropriate the title of Norman Mailer's celebrated essay, published in *Dissent* in the summer of 1957.

Elvis Presley enjoyed the most meteoric rise in the history of American show biz. If 1955 had been the year of the juvenile delinquent—Congress held hearings and magazines waxed solemn as *The Blackboard Jungle* and *Rebel Without a Cause* introduced a new mythology of violence based on the hot-rod and the switchblade—something was still missing: a focal point for the mass audience of crazy mixed-up kids.

*The Searchers was the most radical western ever made—grappling with the idea that Americans were no longer white Europeans but something else.*

Nehru of India, Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, and Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt would issue a joint communiqué calling for the end of French rule in Algeria, as well as the suspension of all nuclear tests and the institution of United Nations-directed disarmament. A few days later, Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal—setting the stage for a post-colonial war that fell when Britain and France launched an attack to regain the canal, with Israel's help.

MEANWHILE, BEHIND THE IRON Curtain, shockwaves were spreading from Moscow: The 20th Communist Party Congress opened in mid-February with Nikita Khrushchev's criticism of the Stalinist personality cult. This attack would be greatly elaborated 11 days later in Khrushchev's so-called secret speech enumerating Stalin's crimes. Even before the *Daily Worker* opened the floodgates as the lone Communist daily to publish the complete secret speech, the newspaper editorialized against Soviet anti-Semitism and, for the first time in memory, let a thousand flowers bloom.

Carl Perkins' rockabilly hit was a new national anthem. Years later, rock journalist Stanley Booth would call it "one of the most important steps in the evolution of American consciousness since the Emancipation Proclamation.

The success of "Blue Suede Shoes" among blacks represented an actually grass-roots acknowledgment of a common heritage, a mutual overcoming of poverty and lack of style, an act of forgiveness, of redemption.

From an artistic point of view, the energies liberated by the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown* received their fullest expression that May with the release of John Ford's great and troubling evocation of American race hatred and reconciliation, *The Searchers*. In its return to the genre's root issues, *The Searchers* was the most radical western ever made—grappling with the idea that Americans were no longer white Europeans but something else.

Indeed, it was while *The Searchers* was in production that Memphis record producer Sam Phillips expressed his desire for a new America in commercial

COMMUNISM WAS OVER! THROUGHOUT the summer of '56, Elvis was attacked by newspapers, preachers, teachers, cops, politicians, the entire state ideological apparatus. There were demands he be banned, curbed, run out of town. The August 27 issue of *Life* showed pictures of fundamentalist congregations praying for his soul, and of Elvis fans prostrating themselves on his front lawn. Of course, Elvis the Pelvis had no need to minister to teen spiritual angst; at the very moment of his apotheosis, a less corporeal idol hovered over the land, subject of a parallel and equally hysterical craze. In late summer, *Time* reported "a weird new phenomenon is loose in the land; a teenage craze for a boyish Hollywood actor named James Dean, who has been dead for 11 months."

The tumult reached its climax in November. *Time* reported that TV had "joined the weird posthumous cult of James Dean" by re-broadcasting three undistinguished tele-dramas in which Dean played minor parts. "He's hotter than anybody alive," one unnamed executive declared. Well, almost anyone. President Eisenhower was overwhelmingly reelected, and the opening of *Love Me Tender*, the routine western into which Elvis had been hastily inserted, was a media event comparable to *The Jazz Singer*—returning its production costs in two weeks.

November 1956 was also the end of the glorious Hungarian Revolution and the end of the hopes inspired by the 20th Party Congress. The Voice of America may have encouraged the Hungarian uprising, but America itself paid only lip service to the rebellion. Eisenhower used his political capital to halt the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of Suez rather than Soviet invasion of Budapest. Still, *Time's* man of the year would be a long-haired youth with a gun, perfect sublimation for the juvenile delinquency that succeeded communism as America's great internal threat. Suddenly the ideological apparatus turned cheerleader, re-imagining the crazy mixed-up

kid as Freedom Fighter.

As the year ended, the Supreme Court rejected Montgomery's last appeal and the bus boycott ended, triumphant. Black militancy had asserted itself, a counter-culture announced its presence, America's vernacular landscape was recognized and a new youthful demographic ran wild. In Europe, reform communism was crushed by Russian tanks. There's a sense in which 1968 was the 12th anniversary of the forces unleashed in '56. **TAP**

*J. Hoberman is a senior film critic for The Village Voice and the author of The Dream Life: Movies, Media, and the Mythology of the Sixties.*

## BOOKS

# HOW AMBITIOUS CAN WE BE?

**ETHICAL REALISM** BY ANATOL LIEVEN AND JOHN HULSMAN

Pantheon, 224 pages, \$22.00

**THE AMERICAN WAY OF STRATEGY** BY MICHAEL LIND

Oxford University Press, 304 pages, \$24.00

BY JAMES M. LINDSAY

**A**NYONE WHO DOUBTS THAT THE Bush Revolution in foreign policy has ended should check the shelves at a bookstore. Hagiographies about the man from Midland are out. Impassioned critiques offering plans for a new approach to foreign affairs are in.

*Ethical Realism* and *The American Way of Strategy* are the two newest entries in the contest to plot the counter-revolution. Both books catalogue the administration's many missteps, and both would have the next president pursue a far less ambitious foreign policy. It is not clear, however, that it would be a better one.

Anatol Lieven and John Hulsman make an odd writing pair, as they acknowledge in the introduction to *Ethical Realism*. Lieven, a former British journalist who did a stint at the dovish Carnegie Endowment for International Peace before becoming a fellow at the self-described "radical centrist" New America Foundation, staunchly opposed the Iraq War. Hulsman, a Republican

who until recently was a fellow at the conservative Heritage Foundation, supported the war until American casualties began to mount. They set aside their ideological differences to write together because of their "common exasperation with the pieties and orthodoxies of both U.S. party establishments."

Lieven and Hulsman's argument, though at times contradictory, can be summarized briefly. Islamic terrorism must be taken "more seriously than any other security issue now facing the United States." Washington should have responded to September 11 by forging a strategy that understood the nature of the adversary and balanced costs against benefits, as Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower wisely did a half century earlier. Instead, Bush and Democratic leaders overextended the United States and left it vulnerable.

The most grievous error was the unnecessary and disastrous invasion of Iraq. But the mistakes did not end there. Wash-

ington has threatened Iran rather than enticed it, denied Russia's legitimate national interests, put economic and strategic pressure on China, and embraced the "folly of Democratism"—the belief that the United States can spread democracy around the world. This mix of "ignorant utopianism and megalomaniacal ambition" has left the United States facing defeat and humiliation.

Lieven and Hulsman's solution to this predicament is the philosophy of ethical realism. Drawing on the writings of Cold War intellectuals Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans Morgenthau, and George Kennan, they want American foreign policy to be guided by "prudence; a concentration on possible results rather than good intentions; a close study of the nature, views, and interests of other states, and a willingness to accommodate them when possible; and a mixture of profound American patriotism with an equally profound awareness of the limits both on American power and on American goodness."

These virtues should be used to fashion what Lieven and Hulsman call the Great Capitalist Peace—essentially a concert of the great powers. Because every country that matters today has a capitalist economy of one form or another, Lieven and Hulsman argue, they all have a stake in sustaining the global market and the benefits it produces. To keep the small powers on board as the big powers keep the peace, Lieven and Hulsman call for "developmental realism," essentially generous trade and aid policies that would spread the global wealth.

*The American Way of Strategy* stresses many of the themes found in *Ethical Realism*. That is perhaps unsurprising given that Michael Lind's career in many ways combines Lieven's and Hulsman's. Over the past two decades he has been an FDR Democrat, the founder of a conservative journal at Yale, a fellow at The Heritage Foundation, an official in Ronald Reagan's State Department, the author of a book on why the right is wrong for America, and an editor at *Harper's* and *The New Republic*. Now he is Lieven's colleague at the New America Foundation.

Despite the biographical similarities with Lieven and Hulsman, Lind's inspi-

ration is different. Rather than looking to Cold War thinkers, he looks to America's founders. (Lind dismisses Lieven and Hulsman's hero Morgenthau for his "appalling ignorance of America's subtle and complex foreign policy tradition.") Lind argues that the Founders thought the purpose of foreign policy was "to create conditions favorable to the individualistic American way of life." In the compact (and at times tendentious) history of American foreign policy that forms the first half of the book, he contends that for two centuries their successors likewise pursued this American way of strategy, even as they adopted different strategies to meet changing threats.

Lind sees American foreign policy veering from its traditional path with the passing of the Cold War. In his view,

***The failing of the Democrats is that they lack the control of Congress needed to constrain Bush and the credibility to bring the public to their side.***

an approach consistent with American tradition would have embraced a new, multipolar world and pushed our allies to provide for their own security. Instead, first under Bill Clinton and then under George W. Bush, Washington pursued a strategy of hegemony. In this "plan for U.S. world domination," Washington is keeping its allies weak and holding China and Russia down. It has also discarded the traditional American reluctance to go beyond preserving its own liberty in favor of a naive effort to bring democracy to others.

Lind believes the hegemony strategy is doomed to failure because it demands too much money and manpower and will turn America into a garrison state that sacrifices liberty for security. Like Lieven and Hulsman, Lind's solution is to construct a great-power concert. The coalition would not seek "to produce liberty, democracy, and the rule of law in every country, but to provide every country with the shared good of peace and basic order, so that the need to prepare for war does not impair the ability of particular nations to establish liberty, democracy, and

the rule of law by their own efforts inside their own borders." Lind would complement his power concert with a trade concert in which the great powers would trade freely in civilian goods while protecting their militarily relevant industries, especially in manufacturing. This would, or so Lind thinks, enable the great powers to maintain the industrial base that makes them powerful.

The criticisms that both books level against Bush's foreign policy are powerful, no less so because many others have aired the same complaints. Both books are less persuasive, however, about their claims that Democrats are playing Tweedledee to the Republicans' Tweedledum on foreign policy. After all, most congressional Democrats voted against the Iraq War authorization. And Democrats have

long urged the White House to restart the Middle East peace process, engage Iran and North Korea, and de-militarize the war on terrorism. Their failing is not that they echo Bush but that they lack the control of Congress needed to constrain him and the credibility to bring the public to their side.

Equally dubious is Lind's claim that Clinton's foreign policy was simply a variant of Bush's. Clinton exercised American power hesitantly and often only after the regional powers Lind hopes will lead failed to do so. Just think Bosnia. Moreover, Clinton's foreign policy—which looks more liberal internationalist than hegemonic—was reasonably (if by no means entirely) successful. North Korea built no nuclear weapons. Iraq (we now know) shelved its weapons of mass destruction program. Relations with allies and former rivals were cordial and productive.

These successes suggest that Lind's fear that Clinton-style internationalism will bleed the treasury dry and trample civil liberties is misplaced. (The threat posed to civil liberties by the need to stop terrorists is another matter, and not

one that Lind explores.) During Bush senior's and Clinton's presidencies, U.S. troop strength fell by more than 25 percent, the defense budget as a share of GDP dropped from 4.4 percent to 3.0 percent, and the federal budget was balanced. Indeed, the remarkable thing about America's current moment at the top of the geopolitical heap is that it has placed rather light demands on our economy and society. Even Iraq, with its \$400 billion price tag and its bloody human toll, has not derailed the American economy or required most Americans to make any sacrifice at all. The United States, unlike almost every other country, can indulge in discretionary wars. That is a dangerous luxury. But would we really prefer it otherwise?

Clinton's internationalism may have had its successes, but do *Ethical Realism* and *The American Way of Strategy* offer something better? The philosophy of ethical realism has undeniable appeal. And that is its weakness. Classical realists, liberal internationalists, isolationists, and even neoconservatives would say they too want a foreign policy that is prudent, weighs costs and benefits, embraces patriotism, and recognizes the limits on American power. To be more than a collection of pleasant bromides, a philosophy of ethical realism needs to answer the tough questions that lie at the heart of all foreign-policy debates. What separates prudence from timidity and folly? When should we accommodate the interests of others? What are the limits on American power? In their penultimate chapter, Lieven and Hulsman detail their specific ideas for dealing with China, Russia, and the Middle East. Some of these proposals are good, some not, but because the authors make only superficial references to ethical realism, the analysis here implicitly acknowledges how little the philosophy tells us.

What about the merits of a concert-of-powers strategy? This is a venerable approach to international affairs. It is also one that Washington has pursued to one degree or another ever since the Berlin Wall fell. The Clinton administration sought to enlist China and Russia as strategic partners. Bush derided those



partnerships in the 2000 campaign. Nonetheless, since September 11 he has solicited—even in the midst of the spitting match over Iraq—an astonishing degree of great-power cooperation in the fight against al-Qaeda.

Can we replicate a similar level of cooperation on a wider array of issues, as Lieven, Hulsman, and Lind assume? Probably not anytime soon. Free riding bedevils great-power collaboration as it does any other cooperative venture. The often divergent, and occasionally antagonistic, interests of the great powers add another obstacle. Washington may think Beijing should use its economic clout to shut down Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program and that Moscow should halt its nuclear deal with Tehran, but China and Russia see their interests differently. It would be nice if, as Lieven and Hulsman contend, common economic interests inevitably drove rivals to common ground. World War I suggests otherwise. And a great-power concert will be especially elusive if it is to be an American-dictated symphony. Lieven and Hulsman's contention that China, Russia, and India can best advance the fight against terrorism "by keeping out of the way" is unlikely to rally officials in Beijing, Moscow, and New Delhi.

Because Washington will often want very different outcomes than Beijing and Moscow, it will by necessity need to work most closely with those whose values are closest to our own. This includes not just our traditional European and Asian allies but rising democratic powers such as India, Brazil, and South Africa. A challenge to recruiting these partners to our side is that with Iraq, Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, and numerous other issues, Bush has destroyed the goodwill many around the world feel toward America. Restoring international trust in American leadership will not be easy. But doing so is essential. Countries will not follow those whom they distrust and resent, and if America does not lead, who will?

Convincing others to work with us rather than against us requires Washington to paint a vision of the world it wants help in creating. The "I've-got-mine" peace that Lind envisions, whose main

attribute is the absence of cross-border conflict, would only confirm the prevailing view of a self-interested United States. Likewise, his vision of a trade concert will be seen abroad for what it is—a dressed-up version of old-fashioned protectionism (and just as unlikely to work).

The generosity that animates Lieven and Hulsman's notion of developmental realism lies closer to the kind of vision that Washington needs to convey (though the authors' inability to decide whether aid is a blessing or a curse for poor countries robs their advice of much practical value). In addition to being seen as working to spread the wealth, Washington needs to stress building effective international institutions and spreading democracy. Competent institutions are critical because they are needed to handle the problems that a globalizing world creates and because we need not just to work with Beijing and Moscow, but to create a world order that pushes them closer to our interests and values. Democracy is critical because it has value for people in all countries and because a world of liberal, constitutional democracies is likely to be safer. For all their complaints about the folly of "Democratism," Lieven and Hulsman accept this point and believe that democracy should be "part of the American legacy." Bush's naive, inept, and cynical use of democracy as a rationale for the Iraq War is not a good reason to abandon democracy promotion as a goal—or guide how it should be done.

Yet the very extent of Bush's foreign-policy malpractice has made it harder to convince Americans to rally behind the kind of international vision that will appeal abroad. As *Ethical Realism* and especially *The American Way of Strategy* attest, there is a hunger for a smaller foreign policy that would allow the United States to do less and make others do more. We may get more of a course correction than we need. And as history shows, falling short can be as dangerous as going too far. **TAP**

**James M. Lindsay** is director of studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and co-author of *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*.

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BY ANN CRITTENDEN

KIKI, A SINGLE MOTHER OF TWO and a legal secretary, had just moved from New York to a small town in Pennsylvania, where the cost of living was much lower. But first she had to find a job, which was proving surprisingly difficult. Finally, during the 11th job interview in which she was asked the same question, “Do you have children?” something clicked. She dared to ask how that was relevant to the work.

The response was blunt. “He said if you don’t have a husband and have children, then I pay less per hour because I have to pay benefits for the entire family.”

Kiki, like most people, assumed that this kind of raw discrimination against a person, just because she was a mother, was illegal. She was wrong. The great majority of states have no law protecting parents from discrimination. (Kiki, who did eventually find a job after much hardship, is now working to change that in Pennsylvania, with no success thus far.)

So it goes in the land of lip service to motherhood. A recent study found that mothers with the exact same résumés as other women are less likely to be hired, promoted, or paid as well as childless women or men with and without children. And that is only the tip of the iceberg of American mothers’ disadvantages. Women make up the majority of people on minimum wage. They are the majority of part-time workers, with lower pay and fewer benefits than other workers, including pensions, sick leave, health care, and vacations. Of all people, single women with children are most likely to declare bankruptcy; in fact, “having a child is now the single best predictor that a woman will go bankrupt,” primarily be-

cause of overwhelming health expenses.

In other words, the current squeeze on middle-class and working families is hitting women with children especially hard, a reality that is increasingly difficult to ignore. In recent months one of the founders of MoveOn.org, Joan Blades, with coauthor Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner, came out with *The Motherhood Manifesto*, calling for sweeping changes in legislation and corporate policy on behalf of mothers. Last May a campaign to promote the book on MoveOn.org garnered more than 50,000 signatures of support, and a new network linking these grass-roots supporters through a Web site, [www.momsrising.org](http://www.momsrising.org), is forming. The authors have also produced an accompanying video, with the support of the Service Employees International Union and the AFL-CIO. And finally, more than 100 representatives of women’s organizations are beginning to support a broad “mothers’ agenda.”

But not all of the new interest in “moms” is on the progressive side. Republican pollsters know that middle-class working mothers can vote either way and are counseling a serious economic appeal to that all-important demographic—no doubt spurred by recent polls showing Republicans are losing the so-called “security moms.” Another recent book, *Leaving Women Behind*, by conservative policy analysts John C. Goodman and Celeste Colgan and *Wall Street Journal* columnist Kimberley A. Strassel, lays out the right-wing appeal for changes benefiting “modern families.”

The two books have a surprisingly common critique: Neither employers nor government policies have adjusted to the changes in American family life. Working

mothers are here to stay, and they are making an important contribution to our society. Practically all of our social insurance programs and corporate workplace policies are in need of a radical overhaul. Programs and laws designed in the 1930s for the single-breadwinner family are hopelessly outmoded, with their worst impact on mothers. The employer-based health insurance system is broken. Companies need to offer far more flexible work schedules to meet family needs, and part-time work needs to be dramatically improved. So far so good. With all these basics in agreement, one would think we have the makings of a grand reform.

But, as usual, the devil is in the details.

*Leaving Women Behind* eschews the overheated and simplistic rhetoric often coming from the right, but its underlying premise is as ideological and predictable as a Stalinist tract. There is one truth and it is this: Government is bad, taxes are bad, and all things private are good. Fundamentally, all we need to do is to get the government out of the way, cut taxes, throw out a bunch of outdated laws, and privatize everything in sight (the authors’ list of public programs to dismantle includes health care, Social Security, and education). In promoting this market fundamentalist agenda, they use a carefully loaded language designed to persuade the uninitiated. Retirees are shunted off into Medicare; defined-contribution pension systems are more “mobile and flexible” than the defined-benefit systems of old; “death” taxes lurk; and getting rid of overtime pay and unneeded perks will free employers to provide higher wages and plenty of comp time when ever you want it.

Savvy readers of *The American Prospect* know that this is bunkum and that people who buy it are shooting themselves in the foot. But these arguments may sound reasonable to many women, echoing as they do the conventional wisdom we’ve been hearing for close to 30 years. And some of the specific policy proposals in this book from the National Center for Policy Analysis, a conservative think tank based in Dallas, Texas, do address anachronisms that penalize middle-class and poor mothers alike.

The book contains a decent analysis, for example, of the ways in which the current Social Security system disadvantages mothers, including the rule that no one can claim any spousal benefits unless she (or he) has been married for more than 10 years. This regulation goes back to a Depression-era fear that conniving younger women would scheme to marry much older men in hopes of soon collecting their Social Security pensions. I haven't heard many women plotting that one recently; the conversation today has more to do with avoiding older men so you won't get stuck taking care of them. In any event, the main effect of this rule is to penalize divorced mothers in old age, given that most divorces take place before 10 years and involve children.

The conservative authors offer a remedy that was put forward many years ago by the National Women's Law Center, a liberal advocacy group. It's called earnings sharing.

Under earnings sharing, Social Security taxes and credits earned by either spouse during marriage would be split 50-50 between the husband and wife as long as the marriage lasts. I once had lunch with a prominent progressive male activist and suggested that his organization support this reform, which I was sure would be popular among all kinds of women. He immediately grasped that sharing earnings would mean fewer Social Security credits of their own for married men, and nothing more was said (or done) about the subject.

*Leaving Women Behind* also advocates a tax reform that has been ignored for too long: permitting married couples to file individual tax returns. This would enable married mothers' earnings to be taxed at their own rate, which in the vast majority of cases would be lower than the rate the couple would pay jointly. The authors are quite right that married mothers pay the highest tax rates in the country, a situation which pushes many working mothers, rich and poor and in-between, right out of the labor market.

The book also contains a persuasive critique of the American system of linking benefits, most critically health insurance and pensions, to private em-

ployment, an arrangement that especially hurts mothers, who often work part-time and also move in and out of the labor market far more than other workers do. Just as many women don't become "vested" soon enough in marriage to earn decent Social Security credits, they don't become vested in employment enough to earn first-class benefits.

The obvious solutions are not further tinkering with our jerry-built private systems, as conservatives advocate, but a sweeping move to portable pensions that can be taken from one job to the next

The steps we need to take sound so basic and obvious that it's hard to believe the United States has made so little progress on them. Ours is the only industrialized country of those studied by the authors that does not have any guaranteed paid sick leave. America is also one of only four countries on Earth that doesn't offer paid parental leave after childbirth. (Our neighbor Canada, in contrast, offers new mothers 50 weeks of partial paid leave in the child's first year.) As a result, more American infants are placed in day care than in other countries, de-



**Mom's Issue:** Paid maternity leave is the law elsewhere, the exception here.

and universal single-payer health care, which would banish a whole host of woes facing mothers, including much job discrimination and the lack of decent benefits for part-timers.

*The Motherhood Manifesto* doesn't address the pension system, but it does come out for universal health coverage, beginning with all children and their parents. And the rest of their agenda reflects the progressive wish list of measures to reduce the poverty and huge inequities facing those who are raising our next generation. (Personal disclosure: I have worked with both women on these issues and can vouch for their liberal yet non-partisan credentials. Indeed, Rowe-Finkbeiner, who lives in Seattle, is married to a former Republican state senator in Washington state.)

spite of a lack of affordable quality care. (In fact, existing child-care subsidies are being cut.) A growing number of countries offer parents of preschool children an opportunity to work shorter hours with prorated pay and benefits; there is no such right in the United States. Affordable child care is unavailable, and existing subsidies are being cut. It is financially impossible to support a child on the current minimum wage and below, though more than a million mothers struggle to do so. Millions of more educated mothers are told, in effect, take a job and never see your kids, or quit. All or nothing, take it or leave it, suck it up, you're on your own. A more hostile environment for women and their children would be hard to design.

And yet, remarkably, until now there



has been virtually no political will for change. The Democratic Party ignored married mothers in 2004 and watched as they voted in droves for George Bush. Nor have Democrats made the larger case for reforming capitalism to fit the way we live. *The Motherhood Manifesto* contains a hint that it ought to be possible to make that case even to capitalists. It quotes a conservative businessman who adopted a family-friendly workplace after hearing a presentation by law professor Joan Williams: "One of the things that struck

me ... was that the order of traditional society—which was God, family, then work—had been flipped in later industrial cultures and it just didn't work."

These books are telling us that left and right agree that our system is failing families. But it is far from clear which side is going to win the argument over what to do next. **TAP**

*Ann Crittenden is the author of The Price of Motherhood and If You've Raised Kids, You Can Manage Anything.*

lican, common-good politics. More recently, I proposed "progressive patriotism" as a useful starting point for liberal politics in the world after September 11, 2001. In his fascinating 2005 book *The Two Americas*, pollster Stan Greenberg offered his "100 percent America" vision that brings together the common good and patriotic approaches.

It's tempting—and not even a bad idea—to see all these frameworks as embodying aspects of the liberal tradition, American-style. After all, the American liberal creed was greatly influenced by the ruminations of the "new liberals" in late 19th-century Britain on the proper understanding of freedom. Against the anti-government ideas of laissez-faire liberalism, the new liberals saw government intervention in the marketplace as enhancing the opportunities and thus the freedom, of individuals.

The British philosopher T. H. Green argued the "ideal of true freedom is the maximum power for all the members of human society ... to make the best of themselves." This is not a bad description of the goals of the New Deal, the GI Bill, and the civil-rights movement.

In turn, some idea of the common good is essential to this notion of freedom, which depends for its achievement on collective or community action and opposes itself to a radical individualism indifferent to social outcomes. And in both the United States and Britain, the rise of a common-good politics has typically been linked to the core patriotic sentiment, "We're all in this together." The British Labour Party's expansion of the welfare state after 1945 was spurred by the spirit of solidarity created during World War II. The GI Bill, an American version of the same story, served as the great postwar engine of upward mobility, though its benefits were well short of universal. The American political establishment embraced civil rights during the Cold War in part because racial subjugation undermined the moral claims of the United States in its conflict with Soviet communism.

All this suggests that the problem for the center-left, as represented by the Democratic Party, may not lie in its ideals,

## BOOKS

# AFTER THE FALL OF THE RIGHT

**THE PLAN: BIG IDEAS FOR AMERICA** BY RAHM EMANUEL AND BRUCE REED Public Affairs, 224 pages, \$19.95

**WHOSE FREEDOM?: THE BATTLE OVER AMERICA'S MOST IMPORTANT IDEA** BY GEORGE LAKOFF Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 277 pages, \$23.00

**BEING RIGHT IS NOT ENOUGH: WHAT PROGRESSIVES MUST LEARN FROM CONSERVATIVE SUCCESS** BY PAUL WALDMAN John Wiley and Sons, 266 pages, \$25.95

**WHISTLING PAST DIXIE: HOW DEMOCRATS CAN WIN WITHOUT THE SOUTH** BY THOMAS F. SCHALLER Simon and Schuster, 352 pages, \$26.00

**APPLEBEE'S AMERICA: HOW SUCCESSFUL POLITICAL, BUSINESS, AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS CONNECT WITH THE NEW AMERICAN COMMUNITY** BY DOUGLAS B. SOSNIK, MATTHEW J. DOWD, AND RON FOURNIER Simon & Schuster, 260 pages, \$26.00

BY E. J. DIONNE JR.

DEMOCRATS HAVE BECOME "THE party of second opinions, wandering from one pathologist to the next," Rahm Emanuel and Bruce Reed write in their unexpectedly witty policy manifesto, *The Plan*.

"Consultants," they say, "told the Democrats to talk more about God; bloggers told them to talk trash about Bush; political self-help books urged them to use their words, rediscover their values, and stand and fight for what they used to believe in."

One of the real growth industries in the United States involves the provision of books offering Democrats advice, theories about what ails them, and elixirs promising a return of pep and drive. A virtual megastore out there proffers master concepts to provide a roomy framework for

all the center-left's good intentions.

Michael Tomasky, the editor of this magazine, has made a powerful case that Democrats should rally behind a pursuit of the "common good." George Lakoff—taking a cue from an important book published last year by John E. Schwarz, *Freedom Reclaimed*—sees "freedom" as the idea the center-left must rescue and make its own. Peter Beinart has urged us to look back to Harry Truman's marriage of social justice and assertive internationalism. Paul Waldman says progressives need to toughen up—to "get off their knees, stiffen their spines, look their foes in the eye and give as good as they get."

For what it's worth, I have offered entries in this sweepstakes. Some years ago, I made an argument similar to Tomasky's on the virtues of civic repub-

which have been more coherent over the years than Democrats themselves usually imagine.

The temptation is then to say that the difficulty must be in the presentation of those ideals or in the wily way the conservative enemy has distorted the public debate, or in some comforting combination of the two. That helps explain the popularity of Lakoff's earlier arguments that the center-left needs to become as good at "framing" issues as the center-right has been.

"Why have so many Democrats snapped up Lakoff's manual?" Emanuel and Reed ask. "Because it tells them exactly what they want to hear. ... According to Lakoff, Democratic arguments are bouncing off the electorate's collective subconscious because conservatives have set the frame and we haven't."

Emanuel and Reed are charitable enough to note that "Lakoff isn't wrong about everything," and they credit him with understanding "the importance of values and an agenda." Lakoff's new book might be seen as a salutary effort to put some meat on his frame. He's surely correct that liberals should not have let the word "freedom" get away from them, though his exertions to hang the entire liberal agenda on a single concept make you worry that the whole thing might topple over at any moment.

To the extent that Lakoff has encouraged liberals and Democrats to think more about how their arguments actually *sound* to other people, God bless him. Lakoff is right that words matter. In his sprightly and well-informed political self-help volume, Waldman is also right that conservatives have been better than liberals in creating a "master narrative" that speaks to the "values and beliefs" behind their policies.

But, as Emanuel and Reed suggest, there's something just too reassuring about laying everything on framing and narrative. Ronald Reagan, great communicator though he was, did not beat Jimmy Carter in 1980 primarily because he "framed" his tax cut well. He won because the country faced simultaneous economic and foreign-policy crises. Under those circumstances, many voters

who did not believe in Reagan's ideas were willing to give them, and him, a try. Bill Clinton was Lakoffian before Lakoff: Boy, did Clinton know how to frame! But voters gave him a chance in 1992 because they sensed listlessness in Washington after 12 years of Republican rule and saw in Clinton's energy a bracing antidote.

And, yes, there was the economy, stupid.

**T**HE MOST HELPFUL ANSWER TO THE questions "What's Wrong With the Democrats?" and "What's Wrong With the Center-Left?" may be the least intellectually satisfying: There is, in fact, no single answer, and the questions themselves may be defective.

It is simply not the case that the Republicans are the nation's dominant political party. The United States is at or near political parity. Over the last four presidential elections, the Republicans averaged just 44 percent of the popular vote, and actually won it just once, in 2004.

Yes, the Republicans have held the House since 1994 and the Senate for most of that period. But the Republicans' margins have never been large, and their narrow majorities reflected less a major shift in the nation's philosophical orientation than a rationalization of American politics as southern conservatives moved into the GOP's ranks. From 1942 to 1994, Congress was, more often than not, under effective conservative control because of the informal coalition that developed between Republicans and southern Democrats. Bold liberal or reforming Congresses (such as those elected in 1964 and 1974) were the exception.

Given this conservative backdrop, the real political miracle is that in the 26 years since Ronald Reagan's first victory, Republicans have never achieved their goal of creating a durable majority coalition comparable in power to the New Deal alignment. Whenever the country seemed ready to make a decisive move right, it pulled back—which it may well do again in November's elections.

This points to a truth different from the one typically diagnosed by the Democratic pathologists: Neither of America's two major parties is backed by a stable coalition. Both Republicans and



Anibal Faúndes

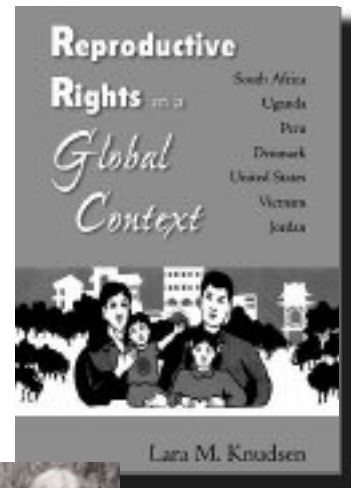
*"Putting into practice the basic elements of this consensus will minimize the suffering that so many women have to endure each day in every corner of the world."*

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Democrats need substantial support from moderates and independents to win. True, self-described conservatives outnumber liberals by a margin of roughly 3 to 2, an advantage for the Republicans. But as Waldman points out—Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson also made this case in their essential book, *Off Center*, being issued this fall with a new afterword—the electorate is actually closer to Democrats' positions on many of the central issues, a fact brought home by the failure of President Bush's campaign to privatize part of Social Security.

Hacker and Pierson's insight is that Republicans have managed to govern from a place well to the right of America's political center. But they may well pay the price for that approach this fall.

***While Democrats retain opportunities in the South, advocates of a Rocky Mountain strategy are right that demographic change has opened up the West.***

Moderate voters, including Republicans, will put up with a right-wing party for only so long. The shift of the South to the party of Lincoln is likely to be answered this year by the shift of Republican seats in moderate northern districts to the Democrats.

That raises the interesting issue at the heart of Thomas F. Schaller's timely book, *Whistling Past Dixie: How Democrats Can Win Without the South*. Given how strongly entrenched Republicans have become in the Deep South, shouldn't Democrats expand the political playing field elsewhere?

Democrats will keep losing, Schaller writes, if they "continue to think retrospectively" about their old days of glory in the South. "That would be a tragedy and a shame," he says, "for there is a future Democratic majority right in front of their eyes if they are only willing to let go of the past to see and seize it."

Schaller and his fellow advocates of a Rocky Mountain strategy are persuasive in seeing a large potential for swing in Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada, and Montana. Each of these states has voted Democratic for president at least

once since 1992. While Democrats retain opportunities in some southern states—Virginia, North Carolina, Arkansas, Florida, and Louisiana among them—there can be no denying that the demographic transformation has opened large parts of the West to political change.

But if geopolitics is part of majority building, the current instability of voting alignments means that the key to victory in the short term lies in exploiting and aggravating divisions within the other party's potential majority. Please forgive that Machiavellian thought. It happens to be true, and in the last two presidential elections, Republicans have understood it better than Democrats and have accordingly pried votes away from Democratic constituencies.

One of the singular successes of Bush and Rove has been their targeting of moderate-to-conservative Catholics. As William Galston and Elaine Kamarck point out in their paper, "The Politics of Polarization," Catholic voters gave Bill Clinton a 16-point advantage in 1996—and Bush a 5-point advantage in 2004. This remarkable shift was key to Bush's 2004 popular vote victory, and to his success in Ohio and, probably, in Iowa.

We are talking here about swing Catholics, not reliably Republican activists in the right-to-life movement. Such voters may have liked the sound of "compassionate conservatism" and were influenced by the national-security issue, which also pushed down the 2004 Democratic vote among women. Republicans have used religion, fear of terrorism, uneasiness about gay marriage, and Bush's projection of a down-to-earth personality to hive off what might otherwise be Democratic votes.

But deep tensions and contradictions in the Republican coalition have come to the fore in Bush's second term. Republican rank-and-filers are genuinely alarmed that the words their leaders

speak about fiscal discipline are belied by their deeds. The 2004 intervention of the federal Republicans in the Terri Schiavo case turned off conservatives as well as moderates. The immigration issue divides business-oriented Republicans from those who fear the influx of newcomers. Latinos, among whom Bush posted substantial gains, have recoiled from the approach of House Republicans to the immigration question. Quietly, many Republicans—believers more in foreign-policy realism than in democratic crusades backed by too few troops—are pulling back from Bush's Iraq policies. And deteriorating wages have many middle-income social conservatives wondering whether their interests lie with a coalition so heavily dependent upon corporate money.

In George W. Bush's final years in office, it is the center-right, not the center-left, that is shattering to pieces.

**B**UT WHAT WILL DEMOCRATS AND THE center-left make of this opportunity? Politics is about tactics, strategy, and high purposes. On the first two, the Bush Republicans have—until recently—been the more competent party.

For one thing, Republicans actually behave as a party. Republican interest groups show genuine solidarity and are disciplined enough to compromise with each other over what the party's priorities should be at any given time. Many progressives feel no sense of solidarity with the Democratic Party—which is why Ralph Nader got enough votes to force the 2000 election to the Supreme Court. The Democrats' "cacophonous jumble of narrowly focused interests," as Waldman calls them, typically places their particular goals far above the shared interests of the coalition of which they're part.

Because they have raised scads of cash and spent it wisely, Republicans have also invested heavily in the best technology money can buy. *Applebee's America*, the new book by Democrat Douglas Sosnik, Bush pollster Matthew Dowd, and Associated Press writer Ron Fournier, is worth reading for its look at how politicians, businesses, and preachers find votes, consumer dollars, and followers by paying



attention to the values of their target audiences and the widespread desire within them for a sense of community. (The book's title is drawn from the name of the highly successful chain that quite brilliantly touts each of its restaurants as a "neighborhood grill and bar.")

The book is especially valuable for what it teaches us about the Bush campaign's use of consumer data to segment the electorate into tiny pieces. The sense of this book—and I suspect it's right—is that Democrats are running behind Republicans in figuring out exactly who is out there, who will vote, and what "values" will move whom.

"The choices people make about politics, consumer goods and religion," Sosnik, Dowd, and Fournier write, "are driven by emotions rather than by intellect." This is less than 100 percent true, and it's not an altogether new idea, but it's worth pondering. The point should be to ally emotion and reason.

That is why policy matters a lot, but in a more complicated way than the "wonks" Emanuel and Reed write about with both respect and humor usually understand. The broad signals sent to voters by policy choices can be as important as the raw details. *The Plan's* plausible, middle-ground policies—in such areas as progressive tax reform, citizen service, universal retirement savings, children's health care, alternative energy, and a modest shot at an alternative approach to the war on terrorism—are not revolutionary. They will not transform the world. But they would likely make the United States a bit fairer, and no progressive would lose an election because of them. That is their point, given that they come from, respectively, a congressman overseeing the task of electing a Democratic House majority and the president of the Democratic Leadership Council.

Some on the left will be disappointed because these ideas do not represent a frontal assault on globalization, NAFTA, and the growing inequalities that are a central and deeply disturbing part of American life. What's interesting is that Emanuel and Reed's analysis is more radical than their solutions. "The economic compact we grew up with is largely gone,"

they write. "The American family has been through decades of turmoil. Forced to work more, parents spend less time with their children and more time worrying about them. We are endlessly torn between community and convenience: a famously gregarious nation of people at risk of turning into iPods passing in the night."

As this magazine's Harold Meyerson has often pointed out, center-left parties everywhere are fully aware of the crisis created by globalization and yet, when they're honest, admit to lacking a fully developed response to the problem. There is a lot of serious work to be done to replace a broken social contract and also to dig the country out from under a foreign policy that has diminished our influence and reduced our ability to combat terror. The answers will have to be more daring than the ones Emanuel and Reed are willing to put forth on the eve of an election.

But center-left parties such as the Democrats have the advantage of acknowledging the tribulations created by the new inequalities. They should understand that what passes for a culture war reflects complicated but rational anxieties rooted in both cultural and economic change. The greatest gap in the Democratic "narrative" is a plausible account of how moral and economic concerns interact. That's the real "values" nexus.

Voters get a sense of what parties and politicians care about more by noticing the issues they choose to highlight than by studying 10-point plans. The center-left has some believable proposals that address problems voters themselves sense as real and that would make life not perfect, but better and fairer. The people down at the neighborhood Applebee's don't ask for a lot more, but they don't expect less, and they'd like to know that politicians asking for their votes are paying respectful attention to who they are, what they say, and what they value. **TAP**

*E. J. Dionne Jr. is a syndicated columnist with The Washington Post, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, and a professor at Georgetown University. His books include Why Americans Hate Politics and Stand Up Fight Back.*

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# The Man in Me

BY EZRA KLEIN

**M**Y FATHER ISN'T MUCH IN THE FASHION ADVICE section. He's given me precisely two pieces of sartorial guidance over the years: Don't buy things you need to iron, and *really* don't buy things you need to dry-clean. These were Abel Klein's two commandments,

and with them I was sent off into the world.

As metaphorical guidelines on how to live, they've served me well. But after I graduated college, it turned out I didn't know how to dress. My office didn't require suits, but the higher-ups frowned on schmuck chic. So some remedial training was in order until I got the hang of business casual.

I think I've got it now. I can also knot a tie, make a fresh summer tomato sauce, mood-light a dinner party, fix a toilet, make the perfect bar snack, and smooth shirts without ironing (hi pops!) by hanging them on the towel hook while I take a hot shower. In short, I'm filling the toolbox of tricks, tips, and shortcuts that only those who've officially entered "adulthood" seem to possess. And it's all thanks to *GQ* and *Esquire*.

**P**OST-PUBESCENT MASCULINITY WAS defined for me, like many teens of my generation, by the so-called "lad mags"—*Maxim*, *FHM*, *Stuff*, and all the rest. They set forth that peculiar mix of testosterone, braggadocio, lust, and physical recklessness that appeared the ideal of young manhood. I rarely met the standard, being somewhat disinclined to jump out of moving cars or actually approach girls, but at least I knew what it was.

Then came college, and a serious relationship, and sustained exposure to feminist theory. The magazines waiting on my doorstep each month began to seem puerile and objectifying. A pity, be-

cause the lad mags, for all their faults, actually contained some gorgeous narrative journalism, written with a flair and aggression *The Economist* rarely musters. For a young writer searching for a voice, the lavish prose provided a powerful counterpoint to the dusty prose of the political and academic writings I favored.

My relief was great, then, when I picked up my first *GQ*. I'd never noticed the magazine before, writing it off as some sort of clothing catalogue (a not altogether incorrect impression, particularly during the ad-heavy fall months) devoid of written content. But a friend left one lying atop a coffee table, and I decided to glance through it. It took me awhile to leave the house that day.

Here was all the self-conscious, flowingly descriptive writing I'd loved, but without the immaturity I'd grown discomfited by. Who knew lad mags were merely men's mags for kids? Subscriptions to *GQ* and *Esquire* followed immediately.

**I**MAY HAVE BOUGHT THEM FOR THE long articles, but a funny thing happened on my way to the feature well: The first chunk of the magazine is a guide-

book to a certain hyper-materialistic, bourgeoisie conception of manhood. It's packed with fashion advice (match your belt to your shoes), clothing suggestions (thin suits this year), how-to features (grill a steak, choose a wine), and first-date recipes (the perfect sandwich).

I didn't pay much attention to the section at first. But slowly, I noticed myself actually entering Banana Republic with my girlfriend, wondering if I might need a sport coat, and what precisely separated the garment from a suit jacket. Or I surprised myself by warning a friend not to grind his coffee beans in advance, as they release important aromatic properties when crushed. I don't even drink coffee.

In addition to acquiring the desires and expectations of a man with far greater earnings than myself, I picked up some useful knowledge. The coffee thing, for instance, or what sort of knot in a tie works with which collar. I learned how to fix various broken items around my house, and how to enhance or inexpensively improve others (dimers—as cheap as \$5!—are magical things). I ceased viewing fashion with unmitigated contempt and, if I haven't yet shed the schlub inside, I developed the capacity to summon an aesthetic when I needed it.

As time went on, I grew bored by the fawning, stylized profiles that extract 6,000 words and a characterological portrait from a cup of coffee the writer shared with some vapid sitcom star. That

wasn't the sort of writing I wished to do. But I did wish to eat well, dress sharp, and

figure out what a cuff link was. The men's magazines have proven the guide to adulthood I always expected but never got. So while I still don't iron, at least now I think about it. And I do occasionally dry-clean. Forgive me father, for I have sinned. But I looked damn good, and felt rather adult, while doing it. **TAP**

